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THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA OF ENGLAND

THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA SERIES

Edited by Richard Burton

THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA OF ENGLAND

BY

THOMAS H. DICKINSON

Barry College Library
Miami, Florida

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THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA OF ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

The Early Victorian Theatre

It has been the fate of the theatre that gave to the world the first dramatist of modern times to rest always under the imputation of failure. Sidney, Addison, and Goldsmith, separate in time, are one in deploring the low state of the theatre. When we come into the nineteenth century we find Byron, surveying the nonsense, the puns, the mummeries of the German schools of English drama, exclaiming:

> Who but must mourn, while these are all the rage
> The degradation of our vaunted stage.

A score of years later, in 1829, Carlyle writes, "Nay, do not we English hear daily, for the last twenty years, that the Drama is dead, or in a state of suspended animation; and are not medical men sitting on the case, and propounding their remedial appliances, weekly, monthly, quarterly, to no manner of purpose?"

From Carlyle's time to our own the English theatre has existed under a universal censure. And yet the theatre has been as active as any other institution of the nation. The year that brought Victoria to the throne brought Macready into control of a company that was to stand as the last support of the poetic drama. That year saw the production of the first plays of Lytton and Robert Browning. During the reign of the great queen, Macready, Boucicault, Charles Kean, Phelps, the Bancrofts, Robertson, Gilbert, and Irving rose and made their contributions to English theatrical history. Before she passed away, Sydney Grundy, Henry Arthur Jones, and Arthur Wing Pinero had adapted to England movements that had attained a vogue on the Continent, and in social structure there had been a complete revolution in theatrical art.

The first theatrical problem to be attacked during the reign of Queen Victoria was the problem of monopoly. The monopoly of the patent houses, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, over the right to produce the English masterpieces of the stage, goes back to the reopening of the theatres under Charles II. In 1843 there was passed the remedial act by which from this time forward all regular theatres in England were placed upon a parity before the government. This Act of 1843 was the last word in a chapter of parliamentary activity which had gone back to 1832 when Edward Bulwer-Lytton, then a new member of Parliament, had moved to raise the disabilities under which the unlicensed theatres suffered in comparison with the Drury Lane and Covent Garden and Haymarket

theatres. This chapter itself was but the concluding passage in a history covering one hundred and seventy-five years, in which more and more vigorous struggles had been made by unlicensed theatres against the monopolies of the patentees.

The situation of the theatre before the correcting Act may best be shown by distinguishing between its legal and actual status. Before 1843 only three theatres in England were legally empowered to play the legitimate national drama, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Congreve, Otway, and others of the old dramatists. These theatres were Drury Lane and Covent Garden, which existed by patent granted by Charles II at the opening of the theatres in 1662, and the Little Theatre in the Haymarket which lived under a renewable license, first granted in 1766 to Samuel Foote. These theatres were known as the majors. As they had a monopoly of legitimate plays, all other theatres, known as minors, were limited to concerts, farces, and variety entertainments. Serious efforts were made by law to distinguish between the legitimate play and the play to be produced by minors, and it was finally decreed that plays for the minors should be only those plays that had musical accompaniment.

In its main principles the law was clear enough, but facts continued to develop to make difficult the administration of the law. The patent theatres had been established by Charles II in a city of less than two hundred thousand inhabitants. By the beginning of the nineteenth century London had grown to be a city of almost a million. To meet the new demands of the

audience, the managers enlarged their theatres to such a size that only great productions could be staged in them. Meanwhile the minor theatres were growing to great popularity. These theatres had developed from the amusement taverns of the eighteenth century, in the East End and in the outskirts, from Vauxhall and Marylebone Gardens, from Astleys and the Surrey Gardens. As their patronage grew they were improved; the Olympic and the Adelphi of the early nineteenth century were as well appointed as the patent theatres. At first these theatres limited themselves to concerts, pantomimes, burlettas, and animal shows. The next step is the exchange of entertainments between the two classes of houses, the patent theatres borrowing the burlettas and animal shows of the minors and presenting them between the acts of their legitimate plays, and the minors in retaliation presenting Shakespeare and high comedy.

Under such conditions the protected theatre sank lower, and the popular theatre improved in standing. Though working under great handicaps the minor theatres managed to supply some good productions, to produce some good actors and many playwrights. The patent theatres were impoverished by legal battles and large productions. The most serious result of the situation was that it was a breeder of chaos. Between the spectacular drama of the patent theatres and the new domestic strains of the better minors, the true legitimate play fell to the ground. The business of the theatre was involved in subterfuges and jealousies. There was destroyed the respect the citizens should

have for the national institution of the theatre and for the traditions of the legitimate stage. From these days two movements stand out, the death of the old romantic tradition and the rise of a popular theatre.

A condition had been reached that no Parliamentary action alone could correct. In 1843 Parliament passed the act for the freeing of the theatres. Instead of a chaos of subterfuges there now followed the chaos of new-found liberty. Within two years after 1843 the companies of the two great theatres were scattered through the minor theatres. In suddenly liberating the theatres without giving any support to the better standards of the nation's drama the English Parliament showed the same disregard for dramatic art that had been shown in continuing the patents. Here was an opportunity permanently to establish the national theatre as a guardian of tradition and a school of the art. No such thing was done. All the theatres were put upon the same plane, to fight the battle of life or death with such weapons as they had. Comedy and poetic drama were thrown into the arena with vaudevilles and burlesques. The only interest the crown retained in drama was in a continuance of a hampering control. Music halls were compelled still to live under the general classification of disorderly places. The censorship of the Lord Chamberlain was reaffirmed and strengthened. Some of the immediate results are indicated by a writer in the *Quarterly Review* for January, 1872. "Companies became of necessity broken up; actors who by time and practice might have been tutored into excellence, were ruined by being lifted into positions

far beyond their powers; every player became a law to himself; the traditions of the art were lost, the discipline which distinguished the old theatres was broken down."

In 1844 J. R. Planché wrote for the Haymarket a topical piece called *The Drama at Home* in which the following lines occur:

Portia. I say you're free to act where'er you please,
no longer pinioned by the patentees.

* * * * * *

Drama. O joyful day! Then I may flourish still!
Punch. May — well, that's something.
Let us hope you will.
A stage may rise for you now law will let it,
And Punch sincerely wishes you may get it.

But a stage did not arise. There followed for twenty years a period of stagnation in the theatre. From the opening of the Princess's Theatre in 1841 until 1866 no new theatre was built in London. Covent Garden theatre was burned in 1856 and when rebuilt went over to opera. Macready retired in 1849. Only Phelps and Kean were successful in Shakespeare's plays, the latter by a strong application of pictorial elements. The state of actors and playwrights was not improved. The collapse of the circuit system, which was to be followed in the sixties by the new centralized system, was accompanied by much suffering on the part of actors and authors. No longer were Norwich, Bristol, Bath, Lincoln, York to maintain their circuits of stock actors from whom might come the future stars of the metropolis. Pending the change to

a better business system, the careers of actors and authors were not happy. "School mistresses and governesses, shop-girls, dress-makers, cooks, housemaids — what are your fatigues to those of an actress?" writes T. W. Robertson. Authors were no better off. No stage writer of this time could afford to live by composition alone. Knowles had been teacher, preacher, and maker of dictionaries, as well as dramatic author. Douglas Jerrold was engaged as dramatic author at five pounds a week and received seventy pounds for *Black-eyed Susan*. Dion Boucicault tells us that, as it was cheaper for a manager to buy a translation at fifty pounds than a new play at two hundred and fifty, the theatre was served by impoverished hacks and translators.

The low state of the theatre was reflected in popular estimation. In 1832 a Parliamentary committee reported that it had found a considerable decline in the "taste of the public for theatrical performances." This low standard was representative of all classes. At the time that Macready was making his first venture at Covent Garden in classical tragedy Queen Victoria was supporting with her repeated attendance the zoological shows at Drury Lane. The attitude of artists, critics, and men of letters toward the theatre was either repugnant or patronizing. Carlyle looked upon the stage as a thing of tricks, attempting to do by mechanical means what could only be done by poetic genius. Other writers surrendered their taste absolutely upon entering a playhouse. Ruskin could admire anything, even the *Claudian* of W. G. Wills. Dickens'

experiments in playwriting are notorious. The story is told of Thackeray that, going to the theatre with Edward FitzGerald, the latter was so bored that he wanted to go home, but Thackeray shouted "By God! Isn't that splendid." The zeal for social reform of the mid-century, for Chartism, for University Extension, for Christian settlements had not yet found the social key to better public amusement.

For such conditions the plays of the first half of the Victorian reign were written. What were the general classes of plays to which the audiences gave their support? Three conditions govern all kinds of plays. First. Romanticism, though past its prime, continues to supply the motives as well as the formulas and characters of plays both prose and verse. Second. The common interests of experience begin to elbow out the ideal interests of the imagination. Third. There begins again an increasing tuition to the schools of playwriting in France.

Under these three conditions six types of plays flourish in the theatre from 1840–1865.

1. *Verse Plays.* A few of these were based upon the classic tradition of Greek and French tragedy, but the great majority follow the models of Elizabethan tragedy and comedy.

2. *Melodrama.* These plays began in the minor houses with German melodrama of the Kotzebue school. In the second quarter of the century there came historical melodramas from France as an offshoot of the romantic movement. These found place on the stages of the great theatres.

3. *Burlesque and Extravaganza.* Opera, which had developed in the eighteenth century out of Italian models, joined with the burletta of the minor theatres to create burlesque. As this grew in popularity it added spectacular elements and became the fairy play and the extravaganza.

4. *Domestic Drama.* The place of serious drama is now largely taken by the domestic play of the middle classes. This play traced its source to the realistic tragedy and domestic comedy of the eighteenth century. To this class belong rural plays, nautical plays, and racing plays.

5. *High Comedy.* With the growth of popular interest in domestic themes and in sensational display high comedy declined in vogue. High comedy was to come again, debased indeed, in the translations and adaptations of Scribe's well-made plays.

6. *Farce.* Taking the place of high comedy we now find the one-act farce played as a curtain raiser at the great theatres, or as a variety at the music halls. In the seventies the farce was expanded to three acts.

In the vogue of burlesque may be found the one sign of health in the early Victorian theatre. Of all the orders mentioned burlesque is the form that expresses most directly a reaction to the life and art of the day. Historically the burlesque motive goes back to the beginnings of opera in England. Gay's *Beggar's Opera,* presented at Lincoln's Inn Fields, a minor theatre, in 1727, was "written in ridicule of the musical Italian drama." The burletta (from Italian *burlare,* meaning

to mock, to banter, to jest) was the form of entertainment expressly sanctioned by the Act of 25 George II permitting the licensing of musical performances in minor theatres. When it was introduced into the Marylebone Gardens it became so popular as to threaten legitimate drama.

Superficial as were the burlesques, they were unique in that they had in them some elements of social and art commentary. The vogue of burlesque represented the desire on the part of men to amuse themselves while still retaining their judgment. Men were ready to laugh at their own extravagances, to turn things around and view the fixed order in a topsy-turvy mirror. While a large part of the stage was dominated by sham sentiment, sensationalism, melodrama, these plays ridiculed the pompous and sued for mirth. Herein lies the justification of the hundreds of burlesques that from the youth of Planché to the time of Gilbert crowded the stages.

The main characteristic of burlesque is that it ridicules by exaggeration the theme of a work of art or of a custom. Thus burlesque refers either to a play or a book, a man or a group of men. But usually these are struck either through their pretensions or their lofty emotion. The great mass of nineteenth-century burlesque attaches itself to the stories that had become threadbare in romantic fiction and on the stage. The stories of Faust and Marguerite, Sappho, Antony and Cleopatra, Dido, Robin Hood, Orlando Furioso, and the plays of Shakespeare were parodied. The primary rule of burlesque was the first rule of paradox: find the

revered thing and laugh at it; find the accepted thing and deny it. Mythology was violated, and probability inverted. Men played women, and women, men. Cowards played hero, and great warriors turned cowards. All this was delivered in bad verse, with multitudes of puns, and to the accompaniment of songs and dances and with irrepressible animal spirits. Many of the early burlesques were not signed. The chief later writers of burlesques were Francis Talfourd, J. Palgrave Simpson, F. C. Burnand, John Brougham, William Brough, and H. J. Byron.

Higher than the burlesque and no less popular was the extravaganza. Planché, who was its creator, describes this as a "whimsical treatment of a poetical subject as distinguished from the broad caricature of a tragedy or serious opera, which was correctly described as burlesque." The extravaganza was usually based upon a fairy legend treated lyrically and with elaborate scenic display and ballet features, ending with a "grand transformation scene." An early extravaganza was Planché's *Riquet with the Tuft*, presented at the Olympic in 1836. To this class belong the same writer's *Sleeping Beauty* (1840) and *The Golden Fleece* (1845). One of the best of the later fairy extravaganzas was Albery's *Oriana* (Globe, 1873), and the height of expense was reached in Boucicault's *Babil and Bijou* (1872).

Each year, as Christmas approached, the theatres of London, both great and small, prepared a Christmas pantomime. This was presented on Boxing Day and ran as long as there were audiences to see it. The

subjects of the pantomime were the fairy stories beloved of children and grown-ups — Robinson Crusoe, Beauty and the Beast, Little Red Riding-Hood, Bluebeard, Sinbad the Sailor, Dick Whittington and his Cat, Jack the Giant-Killer. Planché outlined the conventional nursery tale, "in which the course of true love never did run smooth", and the cross-grained father, the pretty daughter with two suitors, one wealthy and ugly, the other poor and debonair, at the touch of a fairy's wand all turn into the characters of the Harlequinade, and in the end are found in a long pursuit through a dark forest. Thackeray bears witness to the popularity of the pantomime. "Very few men in the course of nature can expect to see *all* the pantomimes in one season" he writes in *Round About a Christmas Tree*, "but I hope to the end of my life I shall never forego reading about them in that delicious sheet of the *Times* which appears on the morning after Boxing Day."

The playwrights of that day were bohemians as a rule, men who knew the chances of a precarious calling, and made up for the pinch of poverty with good spirits. Charles Reade in Triplet in *Peg Woffington* (dramatized by Reade and Taylor as *Masks and Faces*) presents the characteristics of a life he has known, in a character that has some resemblance to the actual Tom Robertson, and a life that appears again faithfully presented in Pinero's *Trelawney of the "Wells."* Among the early Victorian dramatists are Douglas Jerrold (1803–1857), contributor to *Punch*, who was what James Hannay calls a "humorous thinker", author of the long-popular *Black-eyed Susan; or, All in the Downs* (1829); Edward

Fitzball (1792–1873) writer of nautical drama and melodrama; J. Maddison Morton (1811–1891), maker of farces and vaudevilles (*Lend Me Five Shillings, Grimshaw Bagshaw and Bradshaw, Box and Cox, A Capital Match*); William Bayle Bernard (1807–1875), maker of farces; J. B. Buckstone (1802–1879), writer of melodramas; Mark Lemon and John Oxenford, each the author of his scores of plays. Two men stand above the rest. J. R. Planché (1796–1880) was a maker of spectacles and fairy plays. His chief service to the stage lay in his researches into costume and heraldry. As early as 1823 he costumed the Kemble production of *King John* at Drury Lane by historical principle. His *History of British Costume* (1834) was standard. Dion Boucicault (1820–1890), who some years later was to do significant work in the reorganization of the theatre, attracted attention in his early twenties by writing *London Assurance* (1841), one of the best comedies of manners of the century.

With these general conditions before us we are ready for a more particular statement of the decline of the romantic tradition in the theatre.

CHAPTER II

The Decline of the Romantic Tradition

In the decline and disappearance of a romantic drama is to be found a suggestive chapter on the development of a new function of the theatre. This function was not easily reached. It came only through much experiment and a plentiful record of failure. And it arose in practical opposition to the most strongly intrenched tradition on the stage of any modern nation, the tradition of the chaotic, plastic, magnified idealism of the Shakespearean play, held by main force on the stage by managers, dramatists, and actors, until the new popular interests swept it away.

It was not the substance of the Shakespearean ideal that remained. It was only the misapplied formula. Plays that were written in the romantic spirit bear all the evidences of compulsion, of a pressure that goes against the artist's grain. Out of this came the closet play, in itself a confession of divided issues. The closet play arises from the application of the standards of one day to the art of a later day. It was the result of an effort to continue the tradition of Shakespeare or the Greeks in a day which had lost

both traditions on the stage. The romantic dramatists of the nineteenth century fall into two classes. Either they are true poets, like Byron and Browning, neither of whom succeeded on the stage, or they are journeymen who work by models, and bargain with expediency.

The dramatic poets of the forties were desperately clinging to the old standards. They saw the theatre turning to uses that they did not comprehend, and they laid hold of the only security that lay at hand. Some of them honestly and some with selfish purpose, but all by one measure or another, turned to Shakespeare for support. The story of their failures and their relative successes, is full of suggestion as to the new problems of the English stage, a stage that was not soon again to deal with magnified ideals but was to deal with practical facts, and had by experiment painfully to seek for a method.

Behind every dramatic author there stands the producer. For the true source of the romantic revival of the forties we look to William Charles Macready. Reared in the provincial circuits, coming to London at the age of twenty-three in 1816, playing his first part in London in *The Distressed Mother*, a tragedy of the French regular type, for the next thirty-five years Macready did more than any other man of the century to encourage the composition of poetic plays. Macready early supported Sheil, he was the first to give recognition to James Sheridan Knowles, and in 1836 he produced Sergeant Talfourd's severely classical tragedy *Ion*. In this year he quarrelled with Bunn at Drury Lane and took over his

own company. During his management of Covent Garden and Drury Lane he opened the stage to Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Duchess de la Vallière* (1836); *The Lady of Lyons* (1837); *Richelieu* (1839); Robert Browning's *Strafford* (1837); *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (1843); Henry Taylor's *Philip van Artevelde* (1847), and a dozen other promising works in dramatic poetry.

At first glance a list of plays such as the above would seem to promise a new romantic summer. It is only when we look behind the plays to the careers of the writers that we see how hopeless was the effort to keep poetic drama alive. Without exception the careers of these men present a spectacle of divided loyalties, of ill-starred effort in a lost cause, of surrender to the imperious call to write to please the crowd, or of relinquishment of all hopes of success on the stage. With the exception of Browning's work, the best plays of the period were closet plays, R. H. Horne's *Death of Marlowe* (1837), and Sir Henry Taylor's *Philip van Artevelde* (1834, produced 1847).

No man better illustrates the confusion of the stage of the time than Sheridan Knowles (1784–1862). In succession he was actor, editor, writer for the stage, preacher, and teacher of elocution. He was continually ill-paid and improvident. He began with romantic tragedy; he ended with poetic comedy, comedy of manners, melodrama, domestic drama, and adaptation. As if to seal his association with the past Knowles attached verse to all these classes of plays.

If in form Knowles belonged to the past, in substance and temper he belonged to his own time. There is

revealed in Knowles for the first time in English popular romantic drama a consciousness of class distinctions. His first play, *Virginius*, is most nearly Elizabethan in social outlook. The populace is a Shakespearean populace. But in *William Tell* there are the passions of social revolution. Knowles treats the problems of the changing social order as if he were treating a romantic theme. In situations which Hebbel in Germany was now beginning to regard as of social import Knowles saw only the materials of romance. The most charming characteristics of Knowles's work are his power of domestic feeling and his delicacy in the treatment of women. Even his most austere plays are softened by a healthy domestic spirit. "We have Roman tunics but a modern English heart", writes R. H. Horne of *Virginius*. This explains why, though Knowles clung to verse, his plays tended to fancy and comedy rather than to heavy declamation. And perhaps this interest in the immediate present-ment rather than the distant ideal explains his admirable treatment of women.

In Knowles's contemporary, Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873), one can read other evidences of the state of the theatre. An aristocrat, a parliamentarian, a writer of extraordinary intellectual and technical facility, Bulwer had no æsthetic conscience. In his second effort in dramatic composition he produced the most popular romantic play of the century. It is not on record that he ever attempted to search out the spirit of the age. He was content to deal with its false shows. He turned to the theatre to show his

virtuosity. He dropped it when success no longer smiled. His first play, *The Duchess de la Vallière*, produced by Macready at Covent Garden in 1836, was a failure. He wrote *The Lady of Lyons* (1837) to show that he could do the task, and followed this in 1839 with *Richelieu, or, The Conspiracy*. His interest in the stage ceased with the composition of *Money* (1840).

The Lady of Lyons has the one indispensable merit of the romantic play. It has in it the free plunge of life. Against this merit all its faults, its sentimentality, its mock revolutionary spirit, its tawdry imagery, bad verse, and tricky intrigue count for nothing. The play has succeeded because the author has caught the one trick of the Elizabethans that most imitators miss. *Richelieu* is a better play than *The Lady of Lyons* in that its motives are more honest and its action is more solid. In the writing of this play, which is really a character chronicle, Bulwer has the advantage of the model of Hugo's *Cromwell*. Bulwer-Lytton rendered no service to the stage save to find the weak point in the romantic tradition and stab it through this.

Below both Knowles and Bulwer as a writer, but no less significant of the course of romantic drama, stands Westland Marston (1819–1890). Marston's career as a writer covers the fifty years of the decline of poetic drama and the rise of a new organization and a new formula. *The Patrician's Daughter* was produced by Macready at Drury Lane while young Browning was hopefully writing for the stage. His last

play appeared while Tennyson, under the encouragement of Irving, was belatedly turning to tragedy. Uninspired, capable, an excellent craftsman, Marston devoted himself to the maintaining of the ancient dignities of English tragedy. As a result he found himself alienated from his time. Not having the imagination of Knowles, he had more of the sense of social issues. Social problems are treated in *The Patrician's Daughter*, written when he was only twenty-two; in *The Heart and the World* (1847); *Anne Blake* (1852), a domestic drama; *A Life's Ransom* (1857), a drama of combined historical and domestic character; and in *A Hard Struggle* (1858), a play in prose. When he took up historical tragedy as in *Strathmore* (1849) and *Marie de Méranie* (1850) he was not successful. Though never a playwright of first rank, Marston occupied a position of great dignity during many years and as critic and authority on stage history exercised an important influence.

The one great poet who contributed plays of theatric and poetic merit to the stage of the nineteenth century was Robert Browning. Browning was turned to the stage by the encouragement of Macready. At a meeting in Talfourd's chambers after the performance of *Ion* in 1836, Macready asked Browning to write him a play to relieve him of an American tour. Out of this meeting there came *Strafford*, produced by Macready at Covent Garden in 1837. Thereafter for some years Browning wrote plays diligently, but after composing six plays relinquished hope for success in the acted drama.

Of all the poets of the century, Browning was most richly endowed with the faculties of the theatre. He was no writer of lyrics who was essaying an unsympathetic medium. Jerrold's words after *Strafford*, predicting "for Mr. Browning that he is to rise to such an eminence as a dramatic poet as has not been attained by any in our time", were abundantly warranted by his gifts. He had the gift of character, of pregnant dialogue, of salient action, of vitalized architecture. He was dramatic in that he was concerned with the springs and sources of life and their revelation in the expression of men. He was one with the dramatists of all time in that he probed deep to the motives of men and contrived the uncovering of the sources of their action.

And yet he failed in some of the qualities most essential to the playwright. Browning was never able to handle intrigue. The external plottings of action seemed to him unimportant and not infrequently untrue to the governing impulses of men. For this reason Browning bridged with lyric flights spaces he could not compass dramatically. He failed also in that he was unable to complete the external expression of his internal concept. A great play has two lives, — the inner, which is the greater; and the outer, which is the expression of the inner. Browning's plays are rich with the greater life; either they fail altogether of the outer life or this is disjointed, incoherent, articulate only in flashes. These things give to Browning's plays the appearance of difficulty, and alienate those who demand of the theatre — what they would not

demand of music or painting, — an instant impression at the first blow.

Is drama to be limited to the surface characteristics of a life that is no longer lived in surfaces or may drama reflect in form and substance the deepest life of the time? This is the question we must answer before we can decide that Browning was not a dramatist. He had reflected an age of complex strains rather than the dominant and simple strains that Shakespeare knew. In nothing had he made a greater contribution to drama than in his avoidance of moral imputations on his characters. In Shakespeare men are still good or bad, sinners or saved. With Browning all men are of the "best." The doctrine of the "best" that is Browning's supreme gift to all art, unfits him for the styles of the old theatre. Must it unfit him for the new? When men are accustomed to differentiate men by moral attributes this characterization by loving insight seems to fail in definiteness. Perhaps such elevated persons, such pure spirits never joined in plays as in Browning's, and yet he had villains and cheats and frauds, pious men who killed with too much zeal for right and women who murdered with specious argument. The source of tragedy in his plays lies not in villainy and hate. It lies in one of the varieties of love, in one or another of the illusions of the transcendental motive. The weak characters are treated with a light but never with a forgetful hand, as though he would see them honestly but not with censure. The half-policies of Constance, the fraud of Chiappino, the turncoat Guibert, the weakling

Charles — not from such as these comes the drama of contending forces. There was no place for them on the stage of the nineteenth century, a century that was very anxiously grubbing in the ground, intent on its own purposes, and out of sight of the stars. For the poet himself the decision was inevitable. The forces that were thinning the art of other dramatists drew Browning away from the stage altogether. He saw that he could not give the best of his intense and scholarly mind to the stage and so he gave up dramatic authorship.

Strafford was produced May 1, 1837, with Macready as Strafford and Helen Faucit as Lady Carlisle. The play was well received, but on account of the failing fortunes of the theatre was soon withdrawn. *Strafford* was Browning's one regular historical tragedy to find performance. His chief concern was not so much with the political circumstances of the tottering throne of Charles I as with the minds that met each other around it. The characters are personifications of strong, fixed ideas. Only Strafford himself fails of a pointed clarity. This man, battling with forces of intrigue at court and the inevitable sweep of a new order against which he is trying to protect his king, emerges into a transcendent figure, self-abnegant beyond experience. The play begins with frustrate tragedy, the giant enmeshed within and without. It ends in moon glow. And yet the present critic knows no nineteenth-century English tragedy, with the exception of *The Cenci*, that will stand beside it. In the expressive envelope of speech by which

the states of mind of the characters are revealed, Browning here reaches new heights for drama.

Browning came upon the stage amid happy auguries. For some time he bent his energies toward writing plays that would be practical for production. *King Victor and King Charles* (published, 1842), denominated by the author "the artistic consequence of what Voltaire had termed a 'terrible event without consequences' in the life of King Victor of Sardinia and his son Charles", was followed by *The Return of the Druses*. Both of these plays were written with the demands of the stage in mind. Both are composed for only one scene; and in both, as in *Strafford*, there is action and intrigue. In the former there were only four characters, and the play was kept scrupulously to externals of speech. For this reason the play suffers in poetry and in magic. In spite of the efforts of the author to write for the stage, these plays were not considered available by Macready.

Browning was not seen upon the stage again until *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* was produced under unfavorable auspices by Macready at Drury Lane, February 11, 1843. The play won applause but not hearty support. It was repeated by Phelps at Sadler's Wells in 1848 and by Lawrence Barrett in America in 1888. *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* was written by Browning in five days. In spite of its lyrical beauty and its pathos — of which Dickens writes enthusiastically — the play has many faults. Admiration for its excellent qualities should not permit one to be blind to the strained character of the plot. The situation is impossible because it

violates the tact both of the theatre and of life. We have not only to accept Mertoun's plea for the hand of a woman who is secretly his mistress, but we have to believe that after this has been granted he would continue the association clandestinely. The situation is realized only by means of divinations, coincidences, and repeated actions. A like charge of hasty workmanship must be brought against *In a Balcony*. This play was written in 1853 after Browning had relinquished hopes of stage success. There is no flow of force from character to character. The scenes between Norbert and Constance can hardly be called argument, much less dramatic dialogue. They are chains of dramatic monologue. The action is vague and inconclusive. One may not, indeed does not, ask that all action be external and physical. He does ask that if the action be placed in the mind, it be definite.

But if *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* and *In a Balcony* fail because of the manner of the handling of the materials, this cannot be said of *Colombe's Birthday*. Here, too, is a play that was not highly successful on the stage. It was refused by Kean in 1844 and left until 1853 for performance by Phelps. But such a failure as that of *Colombe's Birthday* must be ascribed to the failure of the modern theatre to broaden its instrumentalities to the highest achievements of dramatic art. Here is a play that treats the body and soul of the time with a playful fantasy that dulls the edge of social meanings. It is a simple story depending upon the knitting together of the minds of men, their ambitions, their loves, their strivings for inner

honesty. The first line starts the action. The last line ends it. Between these not a line could be spared. The structure fits the plot. There is no sign of incompleteness or of a tearing of the cloth. *Strafford* and *Colombe's Birthday* stand as Browning's warrant as a dramatist of the first rank. With *Luria*, Browning gives up thought of stage success. In moving altogether in zones above the stage, the play loses its grip on the concrete. And *A Soul's Tragedy* and *Pippa Passes* are Browning's last attempts in dramatic composition. In these he breaks to pieces the rules by which he had tried to limit himself and indulges his humor and fancy. *A Soul's Tragedy* is in two acts, the first the poetry of Chiappino's life, the second the prose, and the language is fitted to the idea. It is a Machiavellian study, "all sneering and disillusion." The next play reveals the growing richness and freedom of the writer's imagination, which he now no longer attempted to limit to the rules of a restricted art. *Pippa Passes*, though "no stage play", contains material for at least four plays, and the handling is in every sense dramatic, though not adapted to the requirements of the stage.

With the retirement of Macready in 1851, there ends a strong support of the ancient tradition. There now arise sociological melodrama and spectacle plays. Macready's successor, Charles Kean, trimmed his sails to the wind and kept Shakespeare alive by the application of new principles. Charles Kean, the son of the tragedian Edmund Kean, in 1851 assumed management of the Princess's Theatre in London and

inaugurated one of the most remarkable programs of Shakespeare production of the century. As a producer Kean was faithful to the romantic play, to the treatment of which he applied two principles: a lavish scenic display and a code of archæological exactness in text and costume. Neither one of these principles was new. Planché had in 1823 designed the dresses and superintended the production of Kemble's *King John,* and his *History of British Costume,* issued in 1834, had become a reference book of the stage. William Hazlitt, in *A View of the English Stage,* had expressed the precept: "The only rule for altering Shakespeare is to retrench certain passages which may be considered either superfluous or obsolete, but not to add or transpose anything." Kean used these principles as a means of connecting the decaying substance of the romantic play with the newer and more immediate interests of his audiences. His productions of Shakespeare's plays, of which he presented a large number with increasing magnificence, were triumphant. In connection with each performance he issued a *Fly-leaf* explaining the principles upon which the production was based. In the midst of his success as a purveyor of the romantic drama, Kean scarcely can have been aware that he was doing his part to herald the end of the romantic tradition.

Several years before Kean inaugurated his régime at the Princess's Theatre, Phelps opened Sadler's Wells Theatre at Islington, May 27, 1844, hoping eventually to "render it what a theatre ought to be — a place for justly representing the works of our great

dramatic poets." In spite of the fact that he refused to bow to the new demands Phelps enforced a certain measure of success by strength of personality and fidelity to ancient principles. He is now remembered for the fact that he produced more of Shakespeare's plays than any other nineteenth-century manager with the exception of F. R. Benson. He closed his theatre in 1862.

In the third quarter of the century Shakespeare staging was in a state of decline. Managers complained that the taste of the public no longer permitted the old legitimate drama. From across the channel a new school of "well made" plays had come into England. Native dramatists were trying their pens on new and commonplace themes which they were aiming to elevate by methods unknown to the romanticist. After Phelps there came for a few years the pallid art of Gustavus Brooke, to be eclipsed by Fechter's lyrical and melodramatic rendition of *Hamlet*, played in a fair wig and without strutting. Though Fechter's vogue was short-lived, it effectually put an end to the school of the "noble Romans." "Shakespeare spells ruin and Byron bankruptcy", said Boucicault in signalizing the end of an era. In these circumstances Irving, the descendant of Kean, brought a short new vogue for poetic drama in encouraging the aged Tennyson to try his hand at an unfamiliar art.

In the same sense that Macready is responsible for Browning, Irving is responsible for Tennyson. But with Tennyson playwriting was an afterthought, a task undertaken late in a life that had already done its

enduring work. Tennyson's plays are significant as showing his possession in old age of a fecund and experimenting mind. In spiritual quality they display the characteristics of his verse, — moral solidity, sympathy for the poor with no savor of the manor house, and a felicity of phrase that never refines itself into subtlety. But when one considers them as stage plays it is difficult to find anything to say that will do credit to the writer. Control was on them from the start. They were exercises undertaken by a master in a medium with which he was unfamiliar. The little plays, *The Falcon*, *The Cup*, *The Promise of May*, can be compared with nothing so well as with the fantasies of Musset, and nothing so well shows how far Tennyson falls short as a dramatist as does such a comparison.

Tennyson's chief bid for remembrance was made in his historical tragedies, *Queen Mary*, *Becket*, and *Harold*. Only two of these were produced, the first at the Lyceum in 1876, and *Becket* at the same theatre in 1893. These are plays from English history, a field for which few poets have Tennyson's virile British pen. Each of them has something of the hieratical element, a strain that in Tennyson approached theatric effectiveness. In management of historical episodes, in handling of characters, the plays show fidelity to the spirit of history. But they quite fail to endow history with life. They have the appearance of mechanical exercises in an imitated art. The one scene in all these plays that has dramatic vitality is the opening scene of *Becket* in which the king and Becket play

chess and foreshadow the struggle that is to come. The author was unable to distribute his action among his many characters. Becket is on the stage too much, and his successive scenes lack climax. When Tennyson creates intrigue or imitates the comedy of the Elizabethan play, his drama becomes rather lower than second rate. *Queen Mary* and *Harold* are even less successful than *Becket*. The former play is false in following the Shakespearean social divisions of clowns, common people, gentleman, and kings. The character of Philip is badly handled. Though not successful as drama, *Harold* is remarkable for the consistency with which the temper of the play is maintained in the color of the Early English romances.

Irving was the last representative of the older order of production, raised to eminence, as we shall see in a later chapter, by his contributions to the dignity of the theatre. The plays of Tennyson represent a late afterglow of the sunset of the romantic drama in England.

CHAPTER III

Adaptation and Experiment

In 1865 the chaos that began in the freeing of the theatres came to an end. The first sign of new order was the building of new theatres. From 1843 to 1866 the number of theatres had remained fixed at twenty-four or twenty-five. By the end of the century this number had doubled. More significant is the growth in number of music halls, from forty-one in 1866 to over five hundred. The movement for new theatres begins with Marie Wilton's opening of the Prince of Wales's Theatre in 1865. Thereafter new theatres were opened every year. For the first six years the list includes The Holborn (1866), The Queen's (1867), The Globe, The Gaiety (1868), The Charing Cross (1869), The Vaudeville (1870), The Court Theatre, The Opera Comique (1871). Later came the new Haymarket (1879), Savoy (1881), Prince's, and Criterion (1880).

The inauguration of theatre building introduced the era of commercial speculation. Many of these first theatres were failures. But while there was failure, there was also success. Actors, authors, and managers began

to share large incomes. Audiences began to increase in size and improve in quality. As the artificial conditions that had governed the stage began to pass away many of the people who had before neglected the theatre began to turn to it for entertainment. Theatres became more ornate and more comfortable. The day of great fortunes and reputations had begun.

In the play itself there were signs of the settling of values. As the romantic tradition subsided, men turned to the theatre for a commentary on their own times. The changes in the intellectual and social life of England were reflected in the new technique of the play and the new ideals of its production. To the new popular interests, practical, immediate, full of problems, the romantic play of idealism made little appeal. Boucicault expresses the condition of society and the stage when he writes, "Our Milton has been directed to dismount Pegasus and bestride the lightning which science has bridled, Shakespeare is occupied in editing a morning newspaper, Dante is exploring the Isthmus of Panama to locate an interoceanic canal, Bacon is trying to reach the North Pole, while Michael Angelo is inventing a sewing machine."

It need hardly be said that the new plays were trashy enough. In casting away the romantic play, men had discarded the only tradition that has a firm hold on the English craftsman of the stage. The English dramatist needed now to learn new rules for the making of a play, — a play that should be truthful in observation, immediate in contacts, and serviceable in the creation of new ideas. In this pursuit the Eng-

lish dramatist joined with the dramatists of modern Europe, all of whom were attempting to discover the formulas that underlie a confused social state. But the English dramatist was behind his fellows in that he had little technical skill in the making of new codes of art. When the English dramatist cast about for rules by which to write his new play, he did as he had always done before under like conditions. He proceeded to borrow from France.

So begins an era of French influence to be compared with the dominion of French drama in the eighteenth century. Though the Act of 1852 protected the foreign author for five years, there was until 1875 no limitation upon adaptation, and it was not until 1887 that foreign works were fully protected. Until this latter date all the writers of modern plays, — Reade, Robertson, Taylor, Boucicault, Albery, Byron, — learned their trade in the school of adaptation. And the new French play created the new English audience. For thirty years after 1865 no English writer succeeded on the stage solely upon his own work. French drama was both a school and an open door to the English theatre. And of the play it may be said as Lewes said of the novel, that the frequency of translation into English was in inverse ratio to merit. The plays that could be adapted to English use were the plays of the broadest external appeal. The more delicate strains of French artistry continued to evade the hand of the adapter.

The new drama of practical interests did not come at once. In England as on the Continent it had a

certain connection with romantic drama through the transition form of melodrama. The melodrama of the nineteenth century combines the dynamic principle of the romantic play with the substance of the naturalistic play. The so-called Gothic melodrama of the early years of the century had been a debased reflection in natural terms of the passion of German romanticism. Maturin in *Bertram* and Planché in *Charles XII* had tried to keep alive the austere tradition of verse tragedy, but Holcroft's *Tale of Mystery*, produced at Covent Garden in 1802, had been followed by a line of horror and mystery melodramas down to Buckstone's *Dream at Sea* and the later adaptations of Mosenthal's *Deborah*, which appeared in England as *Leah* (1863), *Ruth* (1868), and *Hagar, the Outcast Jewess* (1869).

The debasing of the ideal currency to cheaper uses is seen again in the French melodrama that follows the French Romantic Revival. The French Romantic movement had been inspired by an English writer, Scott, and by an English company of actors. The movement did not last long and in its best aspects had slight influence on the English stage. But from some of its meaner traits and from its baser copies there come the beginnings of the modern French influence on the English theatre. The most important feature in the control of the new interests is found in the lowering of the caliber of the tragic hero to the dimensions of a figure of entertainment rather than of tragedy.

In this way the Bravo is explained. Usually he was a potentate whose exploits and fate provided

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a certain amount of heroic circumstance without entailing the display of true heroism. He did not lack a certain historical warrant, as is seen in Hugo's *Cromwell*, Dumas's *Henry III*, and *Charles VII*. Often he was a pretender, an upstart, or an outcast nobleman, as in Hugo's *Hernani*. After the first romanticists of France had been followed by their more sensational disciples, the Bravo made himself increasingly felt both in France and England. Casimir Delavigne, Labrousse, author of *Louis XIV*, Dumanoir, Dennery, Legouvé, were all put under tribute. Of these the first was most influential, his *Louis XI*, taken from Scott, being played by Kean (1855) and Irving (1878); his *Don Juan d'Autriche* being produced (1836, 1864); and his *Marino Faliero*, from Byron, being played by Macready. One of the most famous of the Bravo plays was *Don César de Bazan* of Dumanoir and Dennery, first produced in London in 1844.

The chief figure in these plays was what was known as the Frédérick Lemaître hero, named from the famous premier of the Porte-Saint-Martin. Dumas's *Monte Cristo*, played first in London in 1848 in a French adaptation and again in an English version in 1868, combines the characteristics of the Bravo with the modern adventurer of business. The heroic French melodrama gained an increased vogue through the acting in 1860 and thereafter of Charles Fechter in *Ruy Blas* (1860), *Hamlet* (1861), *Don César de Bazan*, *Monte Cristo*, *Les Frères Corses*, *Rouge et Noir*. Of Bravo melodramas the most popular was Charles Selby's famous *Robert Macaire*, first offered at Covent

Garden in 1843 from the French *l'Auberge des Adrets.* To this class belong Taylor and Reade's *The King's Rival,* produced at the St. James's Theatre, 1854, and many heroic plays by Taylor, Boucicault, Wills, Merivale, and others.

Another type of play directly derived from France, though having some source in English and German romance, was the monster play. The modern vogue of the monster was begun by Hugo in the horrors of his early novel, *Han d'Islande* (1823). The monster appears again in Quasimodo in *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831) dramatized for England by Fitzball as *Esmeralda; or, The Deformed of Notre Dame* (1834). The monster was often a mountebank or a clown whose misshapen exterior covers a tragic soul. A popular monster play was Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse.* Tom Taylor adapted this play, from which also is taken the opera *Rigoletto,* under the title *The Fool's Revenge* (1869). Another form of the monster story is *Belphegor,* adapted first by Charles Webb in 1856 from Dennery and Fournier's *Paillasse* and played again in 1865 under the title of *The Mountebank.* The monster was often a woman. Writing from Paris in 1856, Thackeray mentions Lucrèce Borgia and Mary Tudor as two popular female monsters. While Frédérick Lemaître was the creator of the Bravo on the French stage, Mlle. George was the creator of the female monster of *Tour de Nesle,* of *Lucrèce Borgia,* of *Madame de Brinvilliers.* The female monster, under one or another of the guises of lust, blood-thirstiness or cunning, had a certain vogue in England but not the

popularity of the Bravo. The latest appearance of this character was in the plays of Sardou as interpreted by Sarah Bernhardt.

The French sensation melodrama of Bravos and monsters was influential in England not only in direct adaptation but as well in supplying characters and conventions to the plays of half a century. Among the scores of plays of this type produced in England those which had the greatest influence, aside from the plays mentioned, are *The Corsican Brothers*, adapted from Dumas's novel, *Les Frères Corses*, by Dion Boucicault for the Princess's Theatre in 1852, *Le Courrier de Lyon* adapted as *The Courier of Lyons* (1854) and *The Lyons Mail* (played by Irving, 1877); and the Erckmann-Chatrian melodrama, *The Bells*, played by Irving in 1871.

We now come to London melodrama. This type is distinguished from the French sensation play in that it has little if any romantic motive and is usually concerned with moral problems. For the beginnings of this type of play we go back to the bourgeois tragedy of Lillo in the eighteenth century. An early nineteenth-century melodrama of this type, the source of hundreds of later melodramas, is *Jonathan Bradford, or The Murder at the Roadside Inn*, written by Edward Fitzball in 1833. This type of melodrama is supplemented by the increased interest in city life and in crimes and criminals in which the influence of Bulwer-Lytton, Dickens, and Charles Reade may be detected. Here again France exercised an influence. Following the publication of Eugène Sue's *The Mysteries of Paris*

(1842–1843), there came such plays as Féval's *Mystères de Londres* and Bourgeois's *Notre Dame de Paris*. The famous play *Pauvres de Paris* was adapted to the English-speaking world under many titles, such as *Fraud and its Victims* (1857), *The Streets of London* (1864), *London by Gaslight* (1868), and Augustin Daly's famous *Under the Gaslight* (1867). Against a Balzacian background of houses and streets an action heavily freighted with social consciousness took place. To this general type was added in 1862 the tremendous influence of *Les Misérables*, the first English adaptation of which was *Revelations of London* (1868). Thereafter came such panoramic plays as *London Life, Youth, The World, Lights o' London*, and the later melodramas of J. R. Sims, Paul Merritt, Henry Pettitt. Crude as was the London melodrama, there were features in it of native English life and of forthright principle that made it a useful stepping-stone to other forms of drama.

The chief influence of French drama in achieving workmanlike standards came through the "well-made" play. Like the melodrama, this play discarded the ideal characters of romance for men in their more natural dimensions. It also dismissed elevated motives and passions and became altogether a fabric of entertainment knit out of the strands of the commonplace. The creator of the French "well-made" play was Eugène Scribe. In perfecting the formula of this play Scribe accomplished much good along with something of a more dubious quality. He taught men that commonplace men and events are interesting if they are skilfully presented. When all is said against Scribe,

it must be recognized that in showing the interest in events without calling upon the support of passion or sensation he did a great deal to provide the materials for later dramatists. Though his followers soon discovered his shortcomings, there are few who can disavow his influence.

Scribe's chief service to England was as a school-master of dramatists. In perfecting the "well-made" play, Scribe actually perfected an international type of drama, for the rules he evolved were as appropriate to the human nature of England as of France. The English dramatist showed his first sign of ability to handle contemporary topics when he began to learn Scribe's lessons. In addition he used the Scribe play as a mine of material which he fashioned over according to the more rigid code of English morality. The "well-made" play, with its "gay Colonels, smart widows, and silly husbands," became in England a story of disguised flirtations and avoided dangers. Boucicault's Irish plays were Scribe plays transplanted to the British Islands, and overlarded with sentiment and romance.

The Scribe play deserved no serious consideration either for its tears or for its laughter. Sometimes it was graceful. Always it was adroit. But it could never be mistaken for either art or life. It was neither poetry, satire, nor commentary. It was an entertainment machine adjusted to the demands of the new audiences. For its purpose it borrowed from the effective tricks of all orders of plays without belonging to any of them. It was not an art of surfaces as is comedy of manners, or playful as is fantasy. When it approached tragedy

it was most comic. It represented a highly expert profession, and we pay the maker the same credit we give to any one who knows his trade. The "well-made" play did not go as far in England as it has gone in France. And when it did appear it was usually nothing more than an adaptation or translation. But there are some faults that are never again seen after Scribe had taught dramatists how to avoid them. The "well-made" play was the first consistent adaptation of the natural form to the common substance.

Though adaptation was the rule of the day, it would be false to assume that there was no effort to write English plays. As rapidly as they could do so the dramatists were taking up new ground and occupying it. Out of these conditions there developed a new group of playwrights, men who found their support in adaptation and as rapidly as possible wrote plays of their own. First of these is Dion Boucicault, born at Dublin, December 26, 1820. While in management Boucicault had helped to make an organization that would tap the new theatre-going populace, as a dramatist he helped to tap the spring of common feeling. In his *Leaves from a Dramatist's Diary*, Boucicault mentions three types of plays as popular in his day, — society dramas, domestic dramas, and sensation dramas. He had written all these and burlesque and verse plays as well. He was the author of two of the best comedies of his time, *London Assurance* (1841) and *Old Heads and Young Hearts* (1844). But the work for which he is chiefly remembered is his Irish drama beginning with *Colleen Bawn* (1860) and including *Arrah-na-Pogue*

(1865) and the *Shaugraun* (1875). In *The Octoroon* (1861) Boucicault used the Creole in much the same way that he had used the Irish. Boucicault was a journalist. His plays were written for a day. But his importance in the history of the nineteenth-century theatre cannot be denied.

Like Boucicault, Tom Taylor was a man-of-all-work as a composer for the stage. He was translator, adapter, collaborator, writer of historical, domestic, and sensation plays. With Mark Lemon, Douglas Jerrold, F. C. Burnand, E. L. Blanchard, and W. S. Gilbert, he represented that group of wits who, while writing for the humorous weeklies, continued as well to write for the stage. Under the influence of the verse plays he wrote three historical tragedies, *'Twixt Axe and Crown, Joan of Arc, Anne Boleyn.* He assisted Charles Reade in three plays, *Masks and Faces, A King's Rival, Two Loves and a Life.* Among his hundred plays the following are remembered: *The Ticket of Leave Man* (from Brisebarre and Nus), *The Overland Route, Plot and Passion, Still Waters Run Deep, The Unequal Match.* Not a great man, his success was made by being a very capable ordinary man.

With far more intellectual substance than Taylor, Charles Reade is more of a dramatist and less of a playwright. His first ambition was to be known as a maker of plays. In this he was not successful, for in at least two directions, in historical romance and in the purpose novel, his fame has exceeded that gained in the theatre. Prolix and redundant in his own work, his best traits as a craftsman appeared when he was

adapting other men's work. He adapted Scribe's *The Ladies' Battle* (1851), Maquet's *Le Chateau Grantier* in *The Double Marriage* (1867), and *Drink* (1879) from Zola's *L'Assommoir.* Though not a dramatist of first rank, Reade had an excellent gift of characterization, his power being particularly shown in the handling of eccentric and sympathetic characters.

Three parodists who gained success in burlesque are distinguished by their efforts to better their output. E. L. Blanchard (1820–1889), contributor to *Punch,* critic, Bohemian, supplied the Drury Lane Pantomime for thirty-seven years, writing in all some hundred pantomimes. F. C. Burnand (1836–) had used *Punch* as a medium of parody on the drama in the same way that young Thackeray had used it for the novel. He was a writer of extravaganzas and nautical melodrama and satires. H. J. Byron (1834–1884) was a maker of burlesque for the Strand Theatre. He was a punster, a handler of egregious paradoxes, a hack, now best remembered because in 1865 he joined Marie Wilton in organizing the Prince of Wales's Theatre. From his scores of plays nothing remains save the sense that he might have done good things. All these writers are characterized by the same traits. They show skill in the telling of an untrue or a shallow story, but offer no food for thought, nor commentary on life. The nearest one gets to life is its gay words and its vulgarisms. Significantly enough, one of the characters that comes down to us from before Robertson is that of the poor tragedian Triplet in Reade's *Masks and Faces,* the only representative of

the old traditions now lost in the din of jugglers and mountebanks.

All these were experimenters, men who, knowing the difficult straits of the theatre, handled its art gingerly. There was needed some one with a harder texture of imagination who could take the necessary next step toward a true English theatre. Thomas W. Robertson (1829–1871) is no accident in the English theatre. His family had for generations served on the provincial circuits. Before his success came, he had been an actor, a hack writer, and an adapter. He had attended school in France and had more than the average dramatist's knowledge of the French theatre. He had adapted farces from Dennery and Clairville, and Labiche; dramas from Dennery and Clement, Scribe, and M. Carré; comedy from Scribe and Legouvé. When Marie Wilton gave him his opportunity, he was ready to make a real contribution to the English theatre.

It has been remarked that most of the influence from France was from the poorer kind of play. Meanwhile there was in France another kind of play, which was truer to the standard of art. That there is some influence in England from the sedater dramatists of France is seen in the fact that even while the Englishman is learning his trade from Scribe he is making sporadic and usually unsuccessful attempts to adapt to the English stage the works of Feuillet and Augier. Octave Feuillet was too refined, too elegant and aristocratic, his work was touched with too strong a vein of polite melancholy to adapt well. But his plays

were known. His *Le Village* had been presented as *The Cosy Couple* in the fifties, and in 1877 it was presented again as *The Vicarage, a Fireside Story.* His *Le roman d'un jeune homme pauvre* was adapted by John Oxenford as *Ivy Hall,* 1859, and by Westland Marston as *A Hero of Romance* (1868). Augier was but little adapted in English, but it is certain that he was known. His *L'Aventurière,* which Robertson was to adapt as *Home,* had been played in French in London before 1850. And there was in his school "du bon sens", a spirit that must have been grateful to the English dramatist. His concern with politics, the home, and business was far more to the Englishman's taste than Dumas's interest in social outcasts and illegitimate children. Augier defended social institutions in quite a middle-class way. "A woman without virtue (*pudeur*) is no more a woman than the man without courage is a man", he says. Now this the Englishman might take as a philosophy with which to begin his difficult task of creating a modern English drama. That Robertson knew Augier is indicated by a note to the published edition of *Society,* showing the author's indebtedness for an incident to Augier's *Les Effrontés,* and by his adaptation of *L'Aventurière.*

Robertson's real contribution is his own point of view as applied to the building of a play. Now for the first time in the domestic play there is some evidence of literary interest. Many playwrights had been influenced to their hurt by the broad characterization of Dickens. Robertson boldly takes as his model the whimsical irony of Thackeray, and the disjointed but

intense realism of George Borrow. With the author of *Vanity Fair* he discards formalities of plot and depends for interest upon the close texture of his character study and his knowledge of life. Though some forty comedies, dramas, and farces were written by Robertson, his fame rests upon the series of plays written after his first Prince of Wales's success and including *Society*, *Ours*, *Caste*, *Play*, *School*, *Home*, *Dreams*, *M. P.*, and *War*. Of these all but *Dreams*, *Home*, and *War* were presented at the Prince of Wales's Theatre.

It was the success of *David Garrick*, adapted from the French for E. A. Sothern, that encouraged Robertson to try a play in a new vein. This play was *Society*, which, submitted to the Haymarket, was denounced as rubbish. Finally accepted by Marie Wilton with the remark that "it is better to be dangerous than to be dull", it had its first London production, November 11, 1865, with Marie Wilton as Maud Hetherington, Mr. Bancroft as Sidney Daryl, and John Hare as Lord Ptarmigant. The play was an immediate success. *Society* displays characteristics of the older drama that Robertson discarded in his later plays. The action is based on a multitude of circumstances, many of them smacking of the property room, — the mistaken paternity of a child, the bought notes, the arrest for debt, the loved and the unloved suitor, the usurious Jew. The acts are broken into scenes; there are puns and long asides. The plot is divided into two strands of action, the one taking place in the Lincoln's Inn Owl's Roost; the other taking place in the Ptarmigant house-

hold. But with its traits of the older technique there is a touch of new reality. Men and women are brought upon the stage who were unaccustomed actors before the footlights. There was the world of the new commercial class, of the newspaper, of Parliament. The settings were arranged with that care for truth that came to be the mark of all Robertson's plays. Robertson could make scenery speak naturally. Character and sentiment are revealed with a fine sense of value. Nothing could be more economical of means than the simple love exchanges between Sidney and Maud. But the author does not stop with a surface effect. He makes his play stand for a commentary on certain forces of the time, the power of money in society, the suasion of the press, the effect of social ambition upon the author. There is nothing of the revolutionist about Robertson. He does not favor the poor over the rich. He judges men as men. He hates snobs, whether those of place or those who would achieve place. In all these respects *Society* takes new ground in English drama.

In Robertson's next play, *Ours*, presented in London September 15, 1866, are displayed the characteristics of construction from which the title "cup and saucer play" was derived. The play almost totally lacks in intrigue, but what it lacks in plot it makes up in an intensity of observation and in an ability to transfer to the stage the fleeting impressions of contemporary life. The play is in fact a fabric of contemporary sensations of which the strongest are the feelings of patriotism and affectionate pride in her soldiers aroused in England

at the time of the Crimean War. In stage craftsmanship, devoid of artifices or effects, it is a masterpiece.

Robertson's next play, *Caste*, presented for the first time at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, April 6, 1867, though not immediately the most popular of the series, stands artistically the highest in the list. More substantial than *Ours*, it is more veritable than *Society*. The action grows out of the moral plot and reflects it. There is no adventitious intrigue. The dialogue is easy and natural and sufficiently laconic. As in the former play the scenes were carefully arranged by the author, and specific instructions were given as to the way lines were to be spoken in avoiding the stagey and commonplace.

The substance of the play was English. It was based upon one of Robertson's own stories written in 1866 for Tom Hood's Christmas volume *Rates and Taxes*, entitled *The Poor Rate Unfolds a Tale*. The source of both lies in simple heroism, in love of a man for a woman, in the joy of return after absence, in the joys of parenthood. The influence of Thackeray is clear. Fairfax Daubray of the tale, who becomes George D'Alroy in the play, is in his adoration for Alma like George in *Vanity Fair* in his love for Amelia. Throughout the play is shown the bungling spirit of careless heroism. Frederick Younge, who played D'Alroy, first played in the Thackerayan manner as a heavy, stupid fellow. Clement Scott tells us that Robertson's favorite bit in *Vanity Fair* was the picture of Amelia praying during the Battle of Waterloo for George, who that moment was lying dead with a bullet through his

heart, and he goes on: "We seem in *Caste* to be reading of Becky, and Jos, and Amelia, and George, and Dobbin, not of Polly and D'Alroy, and Hawtree, and Esther."

Robertson was now a successful dramatist supplying plays to two or three London theatres at a time. His drama, *Play*, presented at the Prince of Wales's Theatre February 15, 1868, was the outgrowth of his travels and his interest in Germany. As his art proceeded, the author became interested in the more delicate gradations of character as represented by the variations of national type and the elusive personalities of young people and children. In *Ours*, one of his best characters was that of the Russian, Prince Perovsky. In *Play* we have some charming pictures of Baden, and a love scene famous among the scenes of this master of delicate romance. *School*, produced January 16, 1869, was the most successful of Robertson's plays; at the first production running to three hundred and eighty-one nights. The outline of the plot was derived from the *Aschenbrödel* of Roderick Benedix. This play was something of a *tour de force*, in that the entire psychology of the play is schoolgirl psychology. Perhaps never before, certainly not in the nineteenth century, has a play for adults been constructed out of the playful, elusive, but immature materials of girlish character. That the author succeeded is another mark of his consummate skill as a craftsman, but the play contains no traits that would endow it with long life. In these later plays the characteristics of the author are developing to their extreme. All of his last plays are spun out

of some mood or a delicate piece of fancy. Through them all goes his tenderness in romance, his admiration of the simple heroic virtues, and his satire on the foibles of the new commercial classes. His later plays, *M. P.*, *Home*, *Dreams*, were presented before enthusiastic audiences. With *War* his vogue was broken. After his death his plays continued to be produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, and when the Bancrofts moved to the Haymarket they took them along, playing them in all over three thousand times. There were some signs that these plays would be elevated into a distinct school of playwriting. But when the author died this expectation ceased. In his particular line Robertson could have no successor, but there is no English dramatist from Gilbert to Barrie who is not the better for his pioneering.

CHAPTER IV

Toward a New English Theatre

While playwrights were creating a new style of play others were remaking the theatre itself. First among these were Marie Wilton-Bancroft and her husband, Squire Bancroft Bancroft. Marie Wilton (born 1840) in youth played boy's parts in burlesque. In 1858 she made her appearance in the Strand Theatre under direction of Miss Swanborough in burlesques written by H. J. Byron. Of Marie Wilton in her Strand days Dickens wrote to Forster: "I call her the cleverest girl I have ever seen on the stage in my time, and the most singularly original."

But Marie Wilton was more than a vivacious and graceful actress. She was a courageous and far-seeing manager, whose vision was equaled by her judgment. In 1864 she joined H. J. Byron in the management of the little theatre in Tottenham Court Road, which under permission from the Court they called the Prince of Wales's Theatre. This venture has more than ordinary significance in the development of the modern theatre. In the first place it was a step away from the narrow interests of the fashionable West End.

In size the theatre adapted itself to the new standards of play. With the passing of the play of magnified emotions there passed as well the vogue of the great playhouse. The Prince of Wales's Theatre was made homelike and comfortable. Upon the stage of this theatre the first steps were made toward a new code of acting and management.

The accomplishments of the Bancrofts are to be credited to their own genius as conductors, to their encouragement of the influence of Robertson, and to their careful study of the systems of management of the great French theatres. From the first they set themselves to the creation of an efficient stock company that should adapt itself flexibly to the new comedy. Mrs. Bancroft often played in her own company second to such players as Mme. Modjeska, Ellen Terry, Mrs. John Wood, and Mrs. Kendal. The Bancrofts did not discourage long runs, but they made it a practice always to withdraw a play at the height of its popularity in order that its vitality might be retained for revival. The new management started the custom of paying actors well and protecting them in their dignity as artists. In production a code of complete and tasteful realism was inaugurated. The furniture was carefully selected. The women were carefully gowned, the men arrayed by the West End tailor. Make-up was taken out of the region of caricature and made an art. Of the high standards of this company in production *The Athenæum* speaks, May 18, 1872: "No attempt is made by any one of its members to eclipse his fellows, or to monopolize either the space on the

boards, or the attention of the audience. No piece is presented in such a state of unpreparedness that the first dozen performances are no better than rehearsals; no slovenliness in the less important accessories of the play is permitted."

Something of this rigorous standard of production is due to the influence of Robertson. Bancroft tells in his *Recollections* about the pains this author took to have his "somewhat novel type of characters understood and acted as he wished." And both W. S. Gilbert and John Hare have given testimony to the value of Robertson's methods. Gilbert writes: "I frequently attended his rehearsals and learnt a great deal from his method of stage-management, which in those days was quite a novelty, although most pieces are now stage-managed on the principles he introduced. I look upon stage-management, as now understood, as having been absolutely 'invented' by him." And John Hare says: "My opinion of Robertson as a stage manager is of the very highest. He had a gift peculiar to himself, and which I have never seen in any other author, of conveying by some rapid and almost electrical suggestion to the actor an insight into the character assigned to him. As nature was the basis of his own work, so he sought to make actors understand it should be theirs. He thus founded a school of natural acting which completely revolutionized the then existing methods, and by so doing did incalculable good to the stage."

An important feature of the Bancroft management was the encouragement given to English dramatists.

In addition to Robertson they introduced Wilkie Collins to the stage in *Man and Wife* (1873), and played Gilbert's *Sweethearts* (1874), and the first ambitious play of the young Pinero, *Lords and Commons* (1883). Of the new play they demanded a standard approximate to their own. When good new plays were not available they returned to the old English comedies: *School for Scandal, The Rivals, Money, London Assurance, Masks and Faces.*

Quite as important as the internal accomplishments of this company is the influence it had as a school of drama. Audiences, critics, writers, and actors benefited by its stimulating example. There was hardly a leading actor of the new school of drama of the end of the century who had not been associated with this company. Among the men and women who at different times were members of the Bancroft company were Charles Wyndham, Arthur Cecil, Lydia Foote, David James, C. F. Coghlan, H. B. Conway, John Clayton, John Hare, W. Terriss, Kyrle Bellew, Ellen Terry, Mrs. John Wood, Forbes-Robertson, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal.

When in 1885 the two managers, still young, closed their tenancy of the Haymarket, which they had taken in 1879, it was to the chorus of the first unqualified approval that had greeted the new English theatre. Clement Scott said for them that the seeds of all that is systematic and wholesome on the "modern stage were sown at the Prince of Wales's Theatre by this actor and actress, who, though they retire in the prime of life, were chiefly instrumental in restoring order

and symmetry out of chaos and confusion." And A. W. Pinero is of the same mind in writing to Squire Bancroft. "It is my opinion, expressed here as it is elsewhere, that the present advanced condition of the English stage — throwing as it does a clear, natural light upon the manner and life of the people, where a few years ago there was nothing but moulding and tinsel — is due to the crusade begun by Mrs. Bancroft and yourself in your little Prince of Wales's Theatre. When the history of the stage and its progress is adequately and faithfully written, Mrs. Bancroft's name and your own must be recorded with honor and gratitude."

In the early seventies there were some signs of improvement in the theatre. English authors were encouraged to hope for production. Actors were on a better standing. The styles of the theatres were improved. Great houses arose, each one associated with a particular manager. In the eighties the Lyceum was associated with Irving; the Haymarket under the Bancrofts became the home of comedy; the St. James became the home of the second English company of actors under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal; John Hare went to the Court; and Charles Wyndham took the Criterion. Now the actor-manager had his opportunity. Melodrama and spectacular drama were in the hands of their business managers, Harris and Hollingsworth, but the Bancrofts, the Kendals, Henry Irving, H. B. Tree, E. S. Willard, Charles Wyndham, John Hare built up new traditions of the artist in the place of power. The

years from 1865 to 1890 were years of adjustment of the theatre to new demands, years of encouragement to native authors, and the building of new theatres. There were faults enough and dangers and discouragements. But the hopeful feature was that drama was building on the ground. H. A. Jones has written that the one real contribution of this period was the attempt to treat the realities of modern life. "All was crude, confused, tentative, aspiring. But there was *life* in it."

We have seen that Thomas W. Robertson had a leading place in the formation of the company of the first modern English theatre. It was a member of the Robertson family who established the second company of the dramatic revival. Madge Robertson was the youngest child in the family of which T. W. Robertson was the eldest. Though twenty years separate them she takes her place with him as a clear-headed and practical reformer of the stage. She created the leading part in Tom Taylor's and A. W. Dubourg's *New Men and Old Acres* (1859), and, after marrying W. H. Kendal at the age of twenty, made with her husband her first production in Gilbert's *The Palace of Truth* (1870). Thereafter the Kendals associated themselves with Gilbert in the same way that the Bancrofts had attached themselves to Robertson, producing *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1871), *The Wicked World* (1873), *Charity* (1874). They then traveled at the head of the Haymarket repertory in *As You Like It, The Rivals, School for Scandal;* joined Mr. Hare in a period of management of the Court Theatre, during

which they gave Gilbert's *Broken Hearts* (1875); appeared for a time in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft; and in 1879 began their most brilliant period when they joined Hare again in the management of the St. James's Theatre. This theatre the new managers made an immediate success. More than half of the Kendals' thirty productions between 1875–1885 were from the French. But they produced several new English plays. Aside from several plays by Gilbert they offered Tennyson's *The Falcon* (1879), and Pinero's *Money Spinner* (1881), *The Squire* (1881), *The Iron Master* (1884), *The Hobby Horse*, and *Mayfair*, from Sardou (1885). After separating from Hare, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal made their first separate production in Pinero's *The Profligate* (1887). The Kendal management became famous for exquisite judgment and discrimination in settings of interiors. Herself the most finished actress of her day, Mrs. Kendal's mountings were said to be perfect. A Kendal piece came to be synonymous with "grace, tenderness, intelligence, well arranged accessories, a loyally responsive company."

Maintaining the traditions of the best acting and management, and creating new standards of comedy and refined naturalism, the managements of John Hare and Charles Wyndham were always distinguished. Charles Wyndham's unflagging spirit and clean comedy method created a new school of comedy at the Criterion and gave early recognition to the powers of H. A. Jones. Though an excellent manager, John Hare is remembered chiefly as an actor. From the

time that he played Old Ptarmigant in *Society*, he was recognized as having supplied a new idea to the English stage. It was that of the stage artist in miniature. Hare's record as a manager is marred by the fact that in taking over the Court Theatre in 1888 he inaugurated it as a one-man star theatre rather than a theatre of associated players after the fashion of the Prince of Wales's Theatre.

Henry Irving did not render service to the new English theatre in the same way as did the Bancrofts and the Kendals. His significance attaches to his application of the standards of the past to the conditions of the new time. By grace of a strong personality, perhaps because he represented the last link with a venerated tradition, Henry Irving was able to render unique service to the modern stage.

Irving was the last great representative of the provincial system of tuition. Unlike the members of the Bancroft company, many of whom came to the metropolis with slight experience, he had thoroughly schooled himself in all the established types of parts. Twice he turned away from offers to come to London, in order to return to his provincial circuits for further years of training. When finally he made his appearance in London in 1866, he was equipped as few actors have been since the eighteenth century. All of this equipment was in the line of the romantic or sensational and eccentric tradition. His first recognition came when he played Digby Grant in Albery's *Two Roses* in 1870. His reputation was increased by the manner in which he recited *The Dream of Eugene Aram*,

and he became a figure of first magnitude by his performance of Mathias in *The Bells* (1871). With this play Irving began his career in the Lyceum under the Batemans. Thereafter he played *Charles I* (1872) by W. G. Wills, *Eugene Aram* (1873), *Richelieu* (1874), *Philip* (1874), *Hamlet* (1874), *Macbeth* (1875), *Othello*, Tennyson's *Queen Mary* (1876), *Richard III* (1877), *The Lyons Mail* (1877), *Louis XI* by Delavigne, and in 1878 he became sole manager of the Lyceum. In the same year, joined by Ellen Terry, he began the most triumphant career in the history of the modern English stage, playing *Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice, The Corsican Brothers*, Tennyson's *The Cup, Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado about Nothing*, and other plays of Shakespeare. He was knighted in 1895 and died in 1905 at the height of his fame.

In the above list of plays may be seen many that seem out of place among the quieter plays of the naturalistic movement. Indeed, Irving's repertory looks more like that of a Kean of the middle of the century than that of a leader of the stage of the end of the century. It must be granted that Irving rendered no direct assistance to the new playwright. Nor was he sympathetic with his time as actor and producer. He chose only melodramas and sensation dramas, many of these old and many from foreign sources. He supported no English writer who was experimenting on new genres. His main dependence was W. G. Wills. He gave a reverent and painstaking production to Tennyson's *The Cup, Queen Mary*, and *Becket*. But he was not a man to experiment. As an

actor he was personal and eccentric. He made no effort to study the surfaces of nature. His Digby Grant compared with the way Hare would have played such a part is a cartoon beside an etching. Shakespeare he played after the school of Kean; Hamlet in an ironic and studious melancholy. In settings also he went back to Kean, lavishing upon his Shakespeare the most astounding expense, halting the action of the part with lovely pictures.

And yet Henry Irving's career was a tremendous service to the theatre. Perhaps because he clung to the old tradition and dignified its declining days with expensive trappings, because he respected his art too much to experiment with it, he did more for the English stage than any man of the century. He found it a despised art. He left it one of the most respected of the arts. When he went on the stage, men of the theatre were bohemians and hangers-on of Grub Street. He was the first of many to be knighted. He spoke before universities and learned societies. He contributed to the reviews and issued his essays and lectures in book form. Other men were the workers in the new English theatre. Irving was its statesman. Like Garrick he had the safe gift of conservatism, one of the most necessary on a stage in which the gambler's chance is supposed to be the law of success. "The theatre must succeed as a business if it is to succeed as an art," he often said. In himself making a success he raised the whole standard of the profession. He helped the British playwright by helping the British stage. He was one of

the first to insist upon and achieve the adjustment of the actor's art to his citizenship.

We have now to consider a series of influences from outside the theatre and in some cases from outside the borders of the nation which had a part in the creation of a new English theatre. In 1852 the Court had taken cognizance of the demand for a better stage by appointing Kean to take charge of the Windsor theatricals. A few of the more thoughtful writers of the time were beginning to make suggestions toward a reorganization of the theatre. Charles Kent, in his *Charles Dickens as a Reader*, quotes Dickens as saying that one of his cherished day-dreams was "to settle down for the remainder of my life within easy distance of a great theatre, in the direction of which I should hold supreme authority. It should be a house, of course, having a skilled and noble company, and one in every way magnificently appointed." This dream of Dickens', a reflection of a similar dream long held by Goethe, showed that some men saw a vision of a new theatre more adequately representing the nation. In the minds of other men, critics and scholars, notably George Henry Lewes and Henry Morley, there was the same dream. George Henry Lewes was a grandson of an actor and was himself ambitious to act. As dramatic critic of *The Leader* from 1850–1854 he had written in a style not unlike that of George Bernard Shaw. Brilliant, vivacious, resolute of standards, he was an especially harsh critic of the French carpentry school of playwriting. His essays on the art of the theatre were gathered together in 1878 under

the title *On Actors and the Art of Acting.* Another man of intellectual gifts who wrote on the theatre was Professor Henry Morley, who in 1866 completed the *Journal of a London Playgoer,* an invaluable record of laboratory notes on the state of the theatre in the fifties and sixties, not published until 1891. His prologue is a healthy, keen diagnosis of the state of the Victorian theatre. He calls upon the educated public to take the patronage of drama from Doodle, Dapperwit, and Froth.

Perhaps the first suggestion that the English theatre was not occupying its proper place in the nation followed the visits of foreign troupes to London. During the mid-century there was a change of attitude on the part of British audiences and critics toward visiting companies. Though performances of French and German plays by visiting companies had been common, the companies had not always been well treated. In 1848 the company of the Théâtre Historique was hissed off the stage of Drury Lane when playing *Monte Cristo.* In 1852–1853 Emil Devrient suffered a dubious reception when playing *Hamlet* in German. But as England began to grope toward a solution of her own dramatic problems, there came a change in attitude toward the visiting companies. Fechter was warmly welcomed in 1860. And when, in 1871, the company of the Comédie Française visited England it was received with enthusiasm. During the Commune a company of fifteen sociétaires was hastily organized under the directorship of M. Got to play at the Opéra Comique in the Strand. The company

played with few stage properties. Tickets were sold by subscription as in France. The repertory idea was strictly adhered to, no play being played more than twice in succession. On account of the small company small parts were taken by great actors. These performances were largely attended, particularly by artists and people of the theatre. English actors and critics were attracted by the finish and detail, the exquisite attention given to nice points of the production.

In the following season (1873) Ristori was seen at the Opéra Comique, and beginning with 1874 French companies came every year to the Gaiety. The second visit of the Comédie Française was more noteworthy than the first. It occurred in 1879 at the Gaiety Theatre under the direction of Mr. Hollingshead, who had managed the earlier visit. This time there was the full company, and the tour was triumphant. Criticism had prepared the way by showing the significance of a state theatre, and by supplying criteria by which the excellent technique of the company could be judged. The company was now under the direction of M. Perrin. In the company were M. Got, former director, Favart, Delaunay, Aimée Desclée and Sarah Bernhardt. The career of Sarah Bernhardt as well as a new era in the English theatre may be said to date from this visit. The plays produced then included some examples of the new social drama of Augier and Dumas. The third visit of the Comédie Française occurred in 1893 under the directorship of M. Jules Claretie. Outside of this company the Continental troupe which had the most influence in

England was the German troupe of the Duke of Meiningen, which made its first visit to England in the summer of 1881.

The result of the visit of the company of the Comédie Française in 1879 was to awaken thinkers to the responsibility of the nation towards its theatre. The man who most effectively sounded the call was Matthew Arnold in an article on *The French Play in London* published in *The Nineteenth Century*. This essay, later published in *Irish Essays*, treats the problem of the theatre, not as one for authors, actors, or managers alone, but as a matter involving society as a whole. Fired by the art of the great players from across the channel, Arnold quotes Goethe: "God help us, and enlighten us for the future; that we may not stand in our own way so much, and may have clear notions of the consequences of things."

He inquires into the place the theatre has taken in French society and concludes that England must learn to use her theatre. He finds that interest in the theatre as a social institution is returning.

"We are at the end of a period," he writes, "and have to deal with the facts and symptoms of a new period on which we are entering; and prominent among these fresh facts and symptoms is the irresistibility of the theatre. . . ." And he goes on, "What is certain is that a signal change is coming over us, and that it has already made great progress. It is said that there are now forty theatres in London. Even in Edinburgh, where in old times a single theatre maintained itself under protest, there are now, I believe, over half a dozen. The change is not due only to an increased liking in

the upper class and in the working class for the theatre. Their liking for it has certainly increased, but this is not enough to account for the change. The attraction of the theatre begins to be felt again, after a long interval of insensibility, by the middle class also. . . . The human spirit has a vital need, as we say, for conduct and religion; but it has the need also for expansion, for intellect and knowledge, for beauty, for social life and manners. The revelation of these additional needs brings the middle class to the theatre.

"The revelation was indispensable, the needs are real, the theatre is one of the mightiest means of satisfying them, and the theatre, therefore, is irresistible. That conclusion at any rate we may take for certain. But I see our community turning to the theatre with eagerness, and finding the English theatre without organization, or purpose, or dignity, and no modern English drama at all except a fantastical one. . . . And in this condition of affairs I see the middle class beginning to arrive at the theatre again after its abstention of two centuries and more; arriving eager and curious, but a little bewildered.

"What are we to learn from the marvelous success and attractiveness of the performances at the Gaiety Theatre; what *is* the consequence which it is right and national for us to draw? Surely it is this: 'The theatre is irresistible; organize the theatre.'"

Six years before Arnold's essay on the theatre there had been quietly introduced into England the influence of a man who for thirty years thereafter was to be a storm center in English theatrical affairs. Ibsen's influence struck England at a crucial moment. Through years of adaptation and experiment the English theatre

had been working toward new forms. Ibsen's influence came at a time to direct this movement into narrow channels. On such a man as Ibsen it was necessary to take strong position. One was either for him or against him. The result was that tendencies which were native to the English soil were in some measure combined with his alien influence. Directly his influence has not been great. But indirectly and during a formative period of English drama his outlook and interests took a preponderant place in all speculations about the stage, and had a strong influence on the temper of English dramatists.

Edmund Gosse first introduced Ibsen to England through an article in *The Fortnightly Review* for 1873 in which he treated Ibsen as already a mature man with his major work accomplished, and introduced to English readers *The Comedy of Love*, *Emperor and Galilean*, *Brand*, and *Peer Gynt*. About the same time William Archer became acquainted with Ibsen and made himself Ibsen's English sponsor, a position he has held ever since. The earliest translation of an Ibsen play was Miss Ray's translation of *Emperor and Galilean* in 1876. In 1879 the British Scandinavian Society printed extracts from Ibsen's work. A condensed translation by William Archer of *Pillars of Society* was produced in a morning performance at the Gaiety Theatre, December, 1880. In 1882 Miss H. F. Lord translated *A Doll's House* as *Nora*. The same play was adapted by Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman as *Breaking a Butterfly* (1884). In 1886 Havelock Ellis published *Pillars of*

Society, Ghosts, and *An Enemy of the People* in the Camelot Classics. By this time parties began to form for and against Ibsen. Edmund Gosse, William Archer, R. Farquharson Sharp, A. B. Walkley, and later George Bernard Shaw were for him. The older order of critics, headed by Clement Scott and Robert Buchanan, were against him. In 1891 occurred the famous Independent Theatre production of *Ghosts,* which precipitated the modern war of the critics. In 1893 Beerbohm Tree produced *An Enemy of the People* at the Haymarket Theatre.

English dramatists fought hard against the influence of Ibsen. Up to this time realism had been a theme for critical dispute, but few traces of the influence of Zola or the younger Dumas had found their way to England. But Ibsen's was a force that could not be denied. Though the dramatists disavowed his influence they studied his themes and imitated his methods. Now comes the period of the instrumental drama. The influence of Ibsen made English drama more solid. Ibsen had the virtue that the English dramatist often lacked, the virtue of a consistent moral substance that goes down to the heart of humanity and repudiates all tricks. While the English dramatist could not take from the Frenchman his metallic structure, he could take the softened symbols of an intellectual realism from the Norwegian. Ibsen's art is full of the moral reflections of the inner life. This the English dramatist took and magnified to a cruder purposefulness. He took as well Ibsen's predilection for the study of sex psychology. There follows a generation

in which the sex play obsesses the stage, constructed by super-serious men out of ill-digested materials for an audience quite lacking in Gallic salt.

All these activities within and without the theatre gave to the eighties something of an air of a dramatic revival. Percy Fitzgerald, Moy Thomas, Dutton Cook, Clement Scott raised criticism to new levels. Books begin to appear on the contemporary theatre. In 1882 appeared William Archer's *English Dramatists of To-day.* Four years later Archer published *About the Theatre.* Magazines increased the space given to theatrical interests. *The Athenæum* had a department of drama from its start in 1882. The *Saturday Review* called G. B. S. to write dramatic criticism, and a few years later Shaw was succeeded by Max Beerbohm. *The Fortnightly Review,* under the editorship of Frank Harris, began a series of articles on drama that have made this *Review* a chronicle of the history of the modern dramatic movement. In 1880 there were established *The Theatre* and *The Journal of Dramatic Reform.* The interest that was shown in print was reflected in new organizations for the support of a better drama. In 1882 a meeting was held at the Lyceum Theatre for the discussion of a proposed "School of Dramatic Art" for England. In the same year, under the direction of Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the Costume Society was established to encourage archæological correctness in costuming. In 1884 the *Oxford Dramatic Society* was organized. Learned societies began to open their doors to those who spoke for the stage. In 1884 Mrs. Kendal read a paper

before the Social Science Congress on *The Drama.* In 1888 Archer lectured on *The Modern Drama* before the Royal Institution. Henry Irving was in frequent demand before universities and academies. The time seemed to be ripe for a new drama.

CHAPTER V

Dramatists of Transition

The delicate machine of the Robertsonian play did not long survive the death of the dramatist who originated it. The importance of Robertson lies in the fact that he gave the theatre a bias toward artistry and truth, and not that he offered a formula acceptable for English drama. Of the twenty-one dramatists treated in Archer's *English Dramatists of To-day* (1882), Westland Marston, Lord Lytton, T. W. Robertson, Charles Reade, and Dion Boucicault belonged to a past age. James Albery, F. C. Burnand, H. J. Byron were doing nothing that had not been tried before. Herman C. Merivale, W. G. Wills, Paul Merritt, and George R. Sims were writers of sensational plays and melodrama. Only W. S. Gilbert, Sydney Grundy, H. A. Jones, and A. W. Pinero were doing work of a kind that promised to grow to greater value.

Dramatists were still timid. The way to fame still led through the dramatized novel and melodrama. Old plays were rewritten; the novels of Fielding, Goldsmith, Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens were dramatized. Melodrama increased in popularity and was

transferred from the Victoria and Grecian theatres to the Adelphi, Drury Lane, and Haymarket. It came to emphasize more the claims of justice and the rights of the poor. It called invention to its aid and used the new machinery and common haunts of city life — machine shops, railroad trains, balloons, dock yards, coal mines, lifeboats. These melodramas were not entirely vicious. There was a crude truth in them, an insistence upon reality and the social bond. Of the dramatists of the eighties all save Pinero had been tutored in melodrama. Among the great melodramas were Sims's *The Lights o' London* (1881), Sims's and Pettitt's *The Harbour Lights* (1886), Paul Merritt's and Henry Pettitt's great Drury Lane spectacle *The World* (1884), and H. A. Jones's *The Silver King* (1882). In Wilson Barrett's *The Sign of the Cross* (1895) melodrama reached its climax.

Little need be said of the minor dramatists of the decade. In his later years H. J. Byron falsified the "cup and saucer" play in the thin plot and strained situations of *Cyril's Success* (1868) and *Our Boys* (1875). His *Wrinkles* (1876), played by Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, had better material in it but was unsuccessful with the audience. James Albery (1838–1889) was a man of imagination who scattered his efforts. In *Pink Dominoes* (1877), from the French of Hennequin and Delacour, he provided one of the wittiest of naughty farces, in *Oriana* (1873) one of the most beautiful of fairy plays, and in *Two Roses* (1870) the vehicle by which Henry Irving had his first success with the public. W. G. Wills (1828–1891), Irish dramatist,

journalist, and portrait painter, after 1872 dramatist of the Lyceum Theatre under Bateman, tried to bring back the horrors of the Gothic school. He adapted *Media in Corinth* from Euripides into bad blank verse, provided Irving one of his worst parts in *Charles I* (1872), and in *Juana* gave Madame Modjeska a play of renunciation and madness. His *Claudian*, Princess's Theatre (1883), was a nine days' wonder. In two of his adaptations, *Jane Eyre* (1882), and *Olivia* (1885) from Goldsmith's novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Wills is at his best.

H. C. Merivale (1839–1906) always adapted or collaborated. Like Wills and Albery he was searching for a method, which he never found. Perhaps his best work was in the melodrama, *The White Pilgrim* (1883), from a legend by Gilbert à Beckett, and *Forget-me-not* (1879). Like his fellows, Merivale was guilty of some astounding lapses of tact. Among these are his modernizations of *Faust* under the title *The Cynic* (1882) and *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* under the title *The Lord of the Manor* (1880).

Demanding a little more serious consideration is Robert Buchanan (1841–1901). Before he began to write for the stage Buchanan was the writer of novels, verse, and criticism. He is now chiefly remembered for his attack on Rossetti and the pre-Raphaelites in his essay on *The Fleshly School of Poetry* (1871), an offense for which he tried later to atone. He began to write for the stage in 1880 in *A Nine Days' Queen*, a pathetic treatment of Lady Jane Grey in blank verse. He dramatized his own novels, *The Shadow of the*

Sword (1881) and *God and the Man*, the latter as *Storm-beaten* (1883). While writing other melodramas with G. R. Sims he turned again to adaptation. From his adaptation of *Lady Clare* (1885), from George Ohnet's *Le Maître de Forges*, he gained some notoriety on account of a conflict of rights with Pinero. He adapted *Sophia* (1886) and *Joseph's Sweetheart* (1888) from Fielding's *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews;* adapted *Clarissa Harlowe; Miss Tomboy* (1890) from Vanbrugh's *Relapse; The Sixth Commandment* (1890) from Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment.* Arthur Symons called Buchanan a soldier of fortune, who wrote always for the market, his criticism a kind of fighting journalism: "like most fighters he fought because he could not think."

We now come to consider the work of two men of higher rank. Both W. S. Gilbert and Sydney Grundy were dominated throughout their lives by the desire to do the better things. Yet there is upon the work of both these men the sign of perplexity. Only Gilbert works out of doubt into an acceptable medium. This perplexity was characteristic of all of the work of the theatre of the period. They were few indeed who, like Irving and the Bancrofts, found a stable platform upon which to do their best work. Of the two chief dramatists of the transition period, Gilbert found his way into musical fantasy and remained there. Sydney Grundy, in many respects the precursor of the later writers of serious drama, displayed an early ambition beyond his time, but failed to grow with his time.

William Schwenck Gilbert (1836–1911), a Bachelor of Arts of London University, and barrister at law at twenty-two, was a descendant of Sir Humphrey Gilbert and son of William Gilbert, a man of strong personality, a surgeon and a novelist. Like many other playwrights of the century he got his start on the stage by way of burlesque and service on the comic papers. Not successful with *Punch*, in 1861 he joined H. J. Byron's magazine, *Fun*, and contributed to it hundreds of columns of verse and satire. His *Bab Ballads* (1869) and *More Bab Ballads* (1873) first brought him fame. Having been asked by Miss Herbert of the St. James's Theatre for a Christmas piece in a fortnight, Gilbert wrote in ten days a burlesque on *L'Elisir d'Amore*, entitled *Dulcamara; or, The Little Duck and the Great Quack*. The success of this piece led to a burlesque on *La Figlia del Reggimento* entitled *La Vivandière* for J. L. Toole, which ran for one hundred and twenty nights at the Queen's Theatre, one on *The Bohemian Girl* entitled *Merry Zingara* and a burlesque of *Robert the Devil* for Miss Nellie Farren. All these were successful. Having been determined for some time "to try the experiment of a blank-verse burlesque in which a picturesque story should be told in a strain of mock heroic seriousness," he undertook to treat Tennyson's *Princess* without "willful irreverence." The piece, produced at the Olympic (1870), was an instant success. It was followed by an adaptation, under the title *The Palace of Truth*, of Madame le Genlis's story *Le Palais de la Vérité*, a subject suggested to Gilbert by Mr.

Palgrave Simpson. With this play, produced at the Haymarket with Mr. Buckstone in the cast, his real career began. Thereafter he wrote all kinds of plays, comedies, farces, melodramas, social dramas, verse tragedies, absurdities, writing under his own name and the pseudonym of F. L. Tomline. Even after *Trial by Jury* had opened up his richest vein of success in musical comedy, Gilbert continued to attempt to write serious plays. His last play, *The Hooligan,* is a sordid tragedy far removed from the delicate fantasy of his Savoy operas.

There can be seen in Gilbert's work as a whole signs of indecision. The wielder of one of the most subtle forms of popular dramatic art, Gilbert was never able to rest upon his main achievements with security. Men were impatient of the thing the times most needed in the theatre — the gift of personality, the contribution of an individual outlook. A stage author was expected to satisfy the standards of the past, to cut his cloth by outworn patterns. He was by no means encouraged to discover and to give himself. Meanwhile all the serious temptations were in the direction of conventional comedy and verse plays. It was not until Gilbert had essayed these and found them changing under his hand to the form of his own personal gift that his work came to display the marks of the master.

When Gilbert began to write the musical play, this form held an even lower position than it holds to-day. The Christmas pantomimes and burlesque had collapsed. The fairy play had seen its day and

was confused with the tricks of extravaganza. All the available legends had been debased to the uses of the ballet and the three-act burlesque. The Offenbach operas with Meilhac and Halévy librettos had never found an appropriate place in England. French opera bouffe reached its height in England with *Le Conscrit* (1870); *La Belle Hélène* (1871 and 1873); *Falscappa* (*Les Brigands*) (1871); *Madame l'Archiduc* (1876), witty but alien entertainments of no real significance.

What was that gift of personality which after many experiments Gilbert was to make to the stage? By many this gift is said to lie in Gilbert's tendency to see life in a topsy-turvy way. This is a superficial explanation of his genius. Gilbert was no mere handler of mental shockers. His contribution was a specific that cleared the air of lingering but moribund ideas, that settled the odors of yesterday's feasts of reason and soul. He had a renovating imagination. Hardly a satirist, for he did not attack or even point a meaning, he simply provided a new atmosphere and a new light.

The renovating quality of Gilbert's genius was closely associated with his æsthetic sensibilities. All the positions he took were the result of artistic judgments. As he happened to be dealing with the materials of a frayed and tattered stage, many of Gilbert's æsthetic judgments were reactions against false standards in art. He expresses in his art Pater's dictum, "The way to perfection is through a series of disgusts." Nothing was more common than burlesque on the stage. Little was left to be accomplished by mere exaggeration and incongruity. Gil-

bert subjected everything, particularly the formulas of art, to the judgment of a cheerful taste. He added silvery laughter to satire. Executioners, pirates, death, bridegrooms, kings, æsthetes, fairy lovers received the same sunny critical regard without improper emphasis and without distortion.

The one thing against which Gilbert's taste turned with unerring force was the convention of literary love. From the first Gilbert had shown himself incapable of dealing sympathetically with the themes of the heart. In *Broken Hearts*, in *Gretchen* he had tried to tell love stories, but the result is metallic and forced. When he came to his operas he played upon every string of affection save that of pure feeling. His reaction against the romantic theme was strengthened by the fact that real love was ceasing to subject itself to expression under the methods of sentiment. Love had been shown by the analysts in fiction to involve other things, passions, problems, inhibitions, for which the romantic method had no expression. *Sweethearts*, one of the best of Gilbert's plays, is successful because the love shown is silent, forgetful, and cruel. He ends his operas with a brace of matings lightly engaged in; throughout their action couples exchange easily. All love is but the material of laughter.

Gilbert's earliest plays are concerned with the search for truth in a world of false shows. First he tries to reveal it by turning the world upside down. An early play was entitled *Topsyturvydom* (1874). He soon discards the topsy-turvy method for the

deeper search for the truth that is involved but hidden in all things. Throughout his life it was his passion to find the hidden principle behind the surfaces of life. He makes this effort in *The Palace of Truth*, in *Engaged*, in *Pygmalion and Galatea*, in *Broken Hearts*, in *The Wicked World*. He uses all the formulas by which the older story-tellers resolved the dualism of existence, enchanted islands, palaces of truth, fairy correspondences, the elixir dropped in the eye, the statue coming to life. All these expedients are palpable enough. Indeed, they hardly satisfy Coleridge's demand for the arbitrary suspension of disbelief, so apparent are their methods, so little do they surprise us into a sudden accession of sight.

When Gilbert comes to his later work and drops the topsy-turvy principle, he drops as well the machinery by which he justifies his search. And he makes the search self-justifying. He now becomes less didactic, less fearful that truth will elude him, less convinced that it is necessary that he shall see it in order to be sure of its existence. Truth whether of the taste or the mind eludes the sterner searchings. But it responds to the lighter fancy. And it was fancy pure and simple that Gilbert brings to his later plays. His whimsies were not vagaries, not paradoxes, not mere cheap quips. The Savoy operas, even apart from their music, come nearer to the adequate adjustment of form to sense than any other work written for the theatre in their period.

Before Gilbert came to command of his mode, he busied himself imitating other men and attempting

to force his art into uncongenial molds. Of the short plays written for Miss Marie Lytton's management of the Court Theatre, 1871, the most that need be said is that they lacked distinction. In *Charity* (1874) he deals with a serious theme. It is a story that has a strong foretaste of the temper of H. A. Jones, with a sufficient complement of lost papers, exposures, counter exposures, and puns from the scrip of H. J. Byron. *Dan'l Druce, Blacksmith* (1876) is a melodrama with nautical leanings on a theme suggested by George Eliot's *Silas Marner.* Nothing distinguishes this from the ordinary melodrama with the exception of the knack shown for the handling of archaic atmosphere. Gilbert continued to write thrillers even after the great success of his operas. *Comedy and Tragedy,* written for Miss Mary Anderson and played at the Lyceum Theatre, 1884, is a well-made "strong scene" play of one act, of a pattern directly imported from France. Some of the most surprising lapses of Gilbert's taste are seen in his adaptations of the work of other poets. For *Gretchen* (1879), an adaptation of Goethe's *Faust,* Gilbert did not even have the excuse of burlesque. Nor is there any more excuse for his *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Of Gilbert's prose plays three stand out for especial consideration. All proceed from an attitude of thorough disillusion in matters of life and art. The best of these is *Sweethearts* (Prince of Wales's, 1874). This play has been so often misrepresented on the stage as a sentimental play, that one is likely to forget that it is based upon an ironic view of human nature and a

thorough determination not to surrender to romantic tricks. The play develops from the refusal of a young man and a young woman to express their love. Almost entirely without intrigue, the play depends upon the natural emotions, the bashfulness of love that could not speak, a young girl's unconscious cruelty of coquetry, and the later cruelty of forgetfulness on the part of the man. As a background for the action there is the spirit of time and growth — difficult things to put into dramatic form — which is symbolized by the growing sycamore, and the aggregations of semi-detached villas about the old house.

Tom Cobb; *or, Fortune's Toy*, a farcical comedy (1875), can be compared with nothing so well as with a Shavian comedy. A borrowing Irishman, impecunious surgeons, a heroine turned nine-and-twenty, and a feminine æsthete are the chief characters. Matilda's love affairs are used by her father as sources of loans, and Caroline Effingham is as keen to secure a poet for an ideal lover as she is to secure a financial arrangement in a case of breach of promise. Most of the characters are given to large talk. The plot is based without defense on the vagaries of nonsense. And everything on earth is travestied, — love, the theatre, affectations of refinement in art, doctors, Irishmen, and soldiers.

Engaged, produced at the Haymarket Theatre (1877), is a melodramatic farce made up of train wrecks, elopements to Gretna Green, and legacies left on hard conditions. None of the characters is misled by an emotion or a principle. All understand

each other. The play shreds to pieces the clap-trap of stage romantic love. Vows are exchanged in cold reckoning. Affections are transferred as interest dictates. Cheviot Hill is of the family of Shaw's hard, conscienceless heroes. "I never loved three girls as I loved those three," he says. And Matilda goes him one better. Like Shaw's self-confident heroines she has worked out the budget of her life. "If you would be truly happy in the married state be sure you have your own way in everything. Brook no contradictions. Never yield to outside pressure. Give in to no argument. Admit no appeal. However wrong you may be, maintain a firm, resolute, and determined front." These plays were relatively successful on the stage on account of their daring lines and quick action. But the audiences did not understand them. The plays were as hard as adamant. The revelation of human nature was so acerbant as to amount to exposure.

We come now to four verse plays which by use of a formal or traditional machinery illustrate Gilbert's search for the truth under the appearances of things. These four are *The Palace of Truth* (1870), *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1871), *The Wicked World* (1873), and *Broken Hearts* (1875). All are in blank verse. All depend upon a dualism as between the world of reality and the world of illusion in which we live. All save *Pygmalion and Galatea* are fairy plays. *The Palace of Truth* is a blank-verse fairy comedy based on a French original. *Pygmalion and Galatea* is based upon the classical story of the statue which is so loved by its sculptor that it comes to life. *The Wicked World*

was derived from a story contributed by Gilbert to Hood's *Annual*, in which the idea of duality of life is illustrated by creating a fairy world corresponding to the real world. The action takes place in the fairy world where the female fairies call to the heavens the earthly counterparts of the male fairies. Gilbert burlesqued his own *Wicked World* under the title *The Happy Land* (1873). *Broken Hearts* is an intrigue play, borrowing the machinery and form of a fairy play. It is dominated by the figure of a deformed dwarf, Mousta. The most beautiful touch in the play is the fancy which makes women who have lost the love of man take up the love of sundial and fountain and mirror.

Though these plays had a certain vogue none of them was altogether successful. The blank verse in which they were written was not flexible enough for the demands of pure fancy; moreover, Gilbert had not yet learned how to handle his machinery of the fable. Nothing in the plays suggests anything other than a formal convention and yet we are asked to transport the mind to supernatural regions. Galatea's lapses from innocence to a cockney sophistication might be funny if she had indeed come to life in a no-man's land either of stone or flesh. But they are simply vulgar considering that we are sure that she has never been stone at all, that she is a girl of the time demanding of us a self-deception we cannot practice. And yet there was something in these plays the stage had not had before. It was more than the gift of a fresh personality. It was the gift of an out-

look which was honestly concerned with evaluating life. We shall see by what means in his next group Gilbert achieves the fitting form.

Gilbert had first met Arthur Sullivan in 1871, but beyond a single burlesque, *Thespis; or, The Gods from Old,* the two did no work together until *Trial by Jury* in 1875. Then began the association that was to continue almost without break until the death of Sullivan. The first significance of the Savoy operas lies in the fact that Gilbert resolutely discards the outworn legends out of which the extravaganzas had been made. He creates his stories of commonplace materials which he endows with the qualities of fancy. After *The Sorcerer,* his second opera, he also discards the machinery of convention. There are no more enchanted regions, philters, or veils of illusion. When one steps into the theatre it is to meet real men and women who move about in a new lyrical and fanciful air. These people appear in their own dimensions but without the limitations of the commonplace. Gilbert's stories center in the established institutions, the respected phantoms of the world, the dignitaries, admirals, peers, pirates, brigands, even the ghosts of historic castles. His fantasy was not a cutting off from the world. It was the application of a point of view to the world. There is neither impatience nor sorrow nor tragedy in this lyrical laughter region. Under the author's light touch come death and bribes, the loss of loved ones, and all pass off with a smile. When the Mikado hears that his son has been beheaded, he says, "Dear, dear, this is very tiresome."

These themes of fancy are couched in a construction as careful as the most rigorous tragedy. Gilbert studied the design of his operas with care. Unlike many comic operas the story is perfectly articulate. The lyrics and chorus are parts of the play. Not a line is wasted; not a lyric is dragged in for a purpose outside the structure. The lyrics themselves are remarkable for metrical and rhyming originality. More than this, they are all dramatic.

Trial by Jury (1875), written with side hints on the famous Tichborne trial engaging interest at the time, was so successful that it led to the production of *The Sorcerer* at the Opéra Comique in 1877 and the beginning of the Gilbert and Sullivan vogue. In *The Sorcerer* Gilbert uses for the last time a conventional expedient for the creation of his convention of inner sight. For this purpose he here uses the *Midsummer Night's Dream* instrument of a love philter for breaking up social groups in the mating of the sexes. In this also occurs Gilbert's favorite jest, used again in *The Mikado,* of the bartering of life. With the next play, *H. M. S. Pinafore; or, The Lass that Loved a Sailor* (1878), Gilbert comes out of his experimental stage. This play treats fantastically England's pride in her Royal Navy. In it again the distinctions of birth, the power of love to level ranks, the call of duty, the thrill of patriotism, the fear of death are playfully treated. *The Pirates of Penzance; or, The Slave of Duty* was produced in New York in 1879, while Gilbert was visiting America, and transferred to London in the next year. Into the world of pirates is intro-

duced a system of morality, a sense of duty and law that throw oblique rays on both law and pirates. As Gilbert's constructive imagination becomes more flexible his easy fun in lyric manipulation and rhyming increases.

Oscar Wilde, while still a student at Oxford, attracted much attention to the new æstheticism. The affections of men and women turned away from soldiers and manly sports to poets and artists. Gilbert's next play, *Patience; or, Bunthorne's Bride* (1881), was dedicated to the two artistic schools represented by the two poets, Reginald Bunthorne, a Fleshly Poet, and Archibald Grosvenor, an Idyllic Poet. Nothing more delicious has been seen on the stage than those scenes of "æsthetic transfiguration", in which the welter of influences of Florentine fourteenth century, the Venetian, the Japanese, the Early English blue china, is depicted. The languid love for lilies and lank limbs, the haggard cheeks of pre-Raphaelitism are ridiculed gracefully and without offense. Delightful is Sophia's cry, "You are not Empyrean. You are not Della Cruscan. You are not even Early English. Oh, be Early English, ere it is too late." In satiric conception as well as in design and in lyrical expression, this opera is perfect.

With the next opera, *Iolanthe; or, The Peer and the Peri* (1882), the Gilbert and Sullivan operas were transferred to the new Savoy Opera House. This play treats again the dangerous subjects of England's dignity and the majesty of law. The play delightfully shows a Lord Chancellor married to a fairy and mem-

bers of the House of Lords singing their discussions. Contemporary critics claimed to see in it a serious note of protest for the poor, a moral mingling with the buffoonry. It is certain that the serious social interests of the day may have provided the author a point of departure, but critics showed their inability to understand Gilbert's work when they ascribed to him a note of pathos amounting to anger. In this play for the first time electricity was used in lighting the figures of the fairies by means of storage batteries on their backs.

Princess Ida; or, Castle Adamant (1884), is a revision of *The Princess* presented in 1870, and a "respectful operatic perversion" of Tennyson's poem. One of the daintiest of the Savoy operas, it lacks the lightness of fancy that others possessed. But such signs of fatigue as critics saw in this play were quickly dispelled by the next of the series. In *The Mikado; or, The Town of Titipu* (presented March 14, 1885) we have a work to place beside *Patience* as the two perfect works from Gilbert's pen. The poet had already satirized the Japanese influence. Here he was to appropriate it and transfigure it. In this the vein of refined nonsense is pushed to the limits of genius. The situation is pursued to its most remote illogical conclusion. Yet the story never for a moment escapes the author. The characters of Ko-Ko, of Pooh-Bah, of Nanki-Poo, and the three charming sprites, Yum Yum, Pitti Sing, and Peep-Bo, are universal poetry and fantasy. One may find in this all the commentaries on things in general he chooses to find. Or if he wishes he may see in

it simply a work of fanciful genius created out of a new fabric.

Ruddigore; or, The Witch's Curse (1887), a supernatural opera of mortals and ghosts, uses more stage tricks than are usual in Gilbert's work. For this reason the play is not as general in value, though its immediate appeal was very great. The central idea threw more than a side light on some of the popular legends of the theatre. *The Yeomen of the Guard; or, The Merryman and his Maid* (1888) again jests with death and deals in a spirit of historic fantasy with a tale of heroism. The whole play is like an elaborated ballad. Indeed few modern ballads can excel Fairfax's song, "Is Life a Boon?" In *The Gondoliers; or, The King of Barataria* (1889) as in *The Yeomen of the Guard*, Gilbert takes a romantic conception of mistaken identity, and plays upon this with modern business ideas, and shows majesty in workaday attire. *The Mountebanks* (1892), with music by Alfred Cellier, marks a temporary separation between Gilbert and Sullivan. This play treats the collapse of the outlaw business. Technically it is chiefly noteworthy for its use of puppets. In *Utopia, Limited; or, The Flowers of Progress* (1893) Gilbert and Sullivan joined again. The play deals with an ideal land, "a Despotism tempered with Dynamite" which should realize the dreams of the reformers. Limited monarchs, joint stock companies, modern sociological lectures, government by party, reform of the drama are all adverted to. With this the series of Savoy operas came to an end. Save for *His Excellency* (1894), with music composed by Doctor

Osmond Carr, and *The Grand Duke* (1896), Gilbert wrote no more operas. The vein which he had so diligently mined had thinned. Though he continued to try his hand at playwriting the new activities of the nineties were strange to him. He died in 1911.

The indebtedness of the stage to W. S. Gilbert can be appreciated only by one who recognizes the serious undercurrent of his humor. "All humor properly so called is based upon a grave and quasi-respectful treatment of the ludicrous", he writes. Properly considered, Gilbert was a serious man, and his true tone is that of grace and urbanity rather than of jest. In addition to the debt owed to him as an author the theatre owes much to Gilbert for his rigorous standards, his firm insistence upon the rights of an author over a production, and his point-device artistry in play construction and stage management.

In Gilbert we have a man who worked his way through experiment and indecision into a method. In Sydney Grundy we have a man, perhaps no less honest, though certainly less gifted and adroit, who in spite of successive attempts still found himself turned back, beaten. Sydney Grundy was not a great playwright. But he was ambitious, honest, industrious, bitten with the itch of perfection. He had an artistic conscience. And he had enough of a social conscience to make him wish to adapt the stage to the time. And yet his life falls into two unhappy periods. In the first he was too early; in the second he was too late. He lacked the flexibility to adapt himself to the age. Grundy once wrote of Sims: "Among his

many wonderful qualities, none is so marvelous as his Protean capacity for adapting himself to his opportunities. He never attempts to alter circumstances; he patiently lets circumstances alter him." This ability that he finds in Sims, Grundy did not possess. He is always fighting his time or falling outside of it.

Born in 1848 and well educated, Grundy is the last of the adapters. By 1882 he was considered by Archer one of the most promising of English dramatists. His first play, *A Little Change*, was produced by Mr. and Mrs. Kendal at the Haymarket (1872). His adaptations, many of which were highly successful, include *After Long Years* (1879) from Scribe; *The Snowball* (1879) from *Oscar, ou le mari qui trompe sa femme* by Scribe and Duvergne; *In Honour Bound* (1880) from Scribe's *Une Chaîne; A Pair of Spectacles* (1890) from *Les Petits Oiseaux* by Labiche and Delacour; three adaptations from Alexandre Dumas, père; *Frocks and Frills* (1902) from *Les Droits de fées* by Scribe and Legouvé; *Business is Business* (1905) from Octave Mirbeau's *Les Affaires sont les affaires; The Diplomatists* (1905) from *La Poudre aux yeux* by Labiche. As adapter of these plays, Grundy deserves more than the credit that goes to the purveyor. He was the *entrepreneur* between France and England. In *The Snowball* he introduced much of that ingenuity in high comedy that Pinero has represented in his best work. In *In Honour Bound*, the story of a husband wittily and pointedly cross-examining a young man who has been the lover of his wife, while the new fiancée stands ready to enter the room, we have the theme of *The Profligate*

and *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. *A Pair of Spectacles* was one of the most popular plays of the generation. In *Mammon* (1877), from Feuillet's *Montjoye*, he gives us one of the first financiers of modern drama. Sir Geoffrey Heriott is a true business man who is really concerned in business rather than a romantic figure playing with affairs. This interest in business and practical matters comes out again in *Business is Business* and in *The Glass of Fashion*.

As an original dramatist Grundy set himself to learn the lessons of his masters. His dialogue was crisp, straightforward, expository, lacking in puns and word play, polished to a needle fineness. It was meticulous beyond the standards of speech or of writing. A critic has said that he wrote all his plays with a pencil sharpened to a fine point. The point was so sharp that it was brittle. From Grundy's study of his French models there came his technique of the downward sweep in construction. The play begins at its highest point, and the whole progress is toward catastrophe at the end. This type, which had been practised by Scribe and Dumas and Meilhac and Halévy, had been introduced into England in *Frou-Frou* (1870) and in a version of *Camille* (1880). Grundy very early attempts to introduce the unhappy ending of death into his adaptations and original plays. This he does in *A Bunch of Violets* and *A Fool's Paradise*, and Pinero and Jones do the same after him, but no one has succeeded in making the English audience accept the climacteric death.

In his own playwriting Grundy was dominated by a

moral motive. He attempted to combine the technique of Scribe with the moral intensity of a Norwegian or a German dramatist. So though his plays are well constructed, their excellence has little to do with observation of real life. *The Glass of Fashion* (1883) is a newspaper play dealing with the follies and corruption of society. *The Dean's Daughter* (1888) lashes aristocratic failings, and the worldliness of the church. *A Fool's Paradise* (1889), acted as *The Mousetrap* in America, is a strong, consistent story of a flirt who tries to put her husband out of the way in behalf of a fatal love she has for another. Grundy's gift of cynicism is shown in the ending of the play. When discovered in her designs Mousie takes the poison herself and, with a cool "Good night to all of you", goes out to die. In *Sowing the Wind* (1893) we have a story of illegitimate children; in *The Old Jew* (1894) and *The New Woman* (1894) veracious characters are set in impossible situations. Grundy continued to write plays until well into the new century. Later plays were *Slaves of the Ring* (1894), *The Greatest of These* (1895), *The Degenerates* (1899), and *A Debt of Honour* (1900). While Grundy had the will to truth, he had not the insight of truth. His themes are all themes of the theatre. He was a good workman, but he failed because he was neither artist nor thinker.

CHAPTER VI

Henry Arthur Jones

In Grundy we see the modern dramatist accepting the challenge of his environment and defeated by it. In Henry Arthur Jones we have the first example of a dramatist who secures a measure of success by fighting his environment. Following Matthew Arnold, Jones recognized that the problem of the theatre lies in the hearts and wills of men. All his energy has been used in an appeal to men's hearts and wills for the building of a better theatre.

Henry Arthur Jones, born at Grandborough, Bucks, in 1851, received a common school education. His first play, *Only Round the Corner*, was produced at Exeter in 1878. This was followed by several one-act plays, of which *A Clerical Error* (1879) was the first produced in London. Jones's first long plays, all of melodramatic order, were written in collaboration with Henry Herman or Wilson Barrett. His first success came with the melodrama, *The Silver King* (1882). With *Saints and Sinners* (1884) he set the note for much of his later work, and with *Judah* (1890) he emerged into the first rank of British dramatists.

As early as 1882 Archer recognized Jones for his "earnestness of purpose" and four years later stated that it was his desire, "according to his lights, to produce good work; and he strives after other lights than the footlights."

From the start Jones had upon him the council of good works. He was one of the first to realize the potency of the play in social reform. As a dramatist he seldom lets slip an opportunity to pass judgment on his fellows. This social-mindedness which he displays as a playwright characterizes all his thinking on the theatre. His first production in London had taken place the year in which Arnold had sounded his clarion, "The theatre is irresistible; organize the theatre." Thenceforward Jones devoted himself to this cause. Jones became a propagandist for the theatre in the same spirit in which Ruskin and Morris had become propagandists for art. He saw the social obligation of the dramatist, the social possibilities of the play, and he saw too that these obligations and opportunities were violated by the condition of the theatre in his time. He proceeded to make appeal on behalf of the theatre to the only powers that could bring forth a new theatre, the minds and the hearts of the people themselves.

The dramatist set himself to the solution of two problems in the organization of the theatre. The first of these is the official problem and has to do with the relationship between the theatre and the State. The second is the social problem and has to do with the building of a theatre in the midst of the new society

of the world. Of these two the first is far less important than the second and more simple to handle. It is concerned with such matters as copyright protection, the licensing of theatres, the censorship, and projects of national support. The problems of copyright and music hall license were satisfactorily solved. Only the censorship and the problem of the national theatre are left to vex the dramatist. But the unofficial and social situation presents a permanent problem of increasing difficulty.

More vigorous and captious than the censorship of the king's reader of plays, is the censorship of the English audience. Mrs. Grundy, sitting in the pit of an English theatre, wields the final power over the dramatist's work. And the pit is no ready listener to any direct appeal, to any rational statement of the issues. Jones set himself first to find out what laws, if any, underlie the reactions of the public toward a play, and then to raise the standard of those laws by direct appeal.

In endeavoring to reach the ear and mind of the audience, Jones has used all the channels of publicity. He indulged in an advertising campaign in behalf of good plays. In this spirit he helped to establish the Playgoers Club in 1884, wrote articles in *The Nineteenth Century* and the *New Review*, prefaces to *Saints and Sinners* and *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, addressed audiences of workingmen and students in England and America, and engaged in debates in print and on the platform. In 1895 he issued *The Renascence of the English Drama* and in 1912 *Foundations of a National*

Drama, discussing in these volumes such subjects as drama and the mob, education and the theatre, religion, the provinces, and censorship.

The characteristics that Jones shows in his campaigning he shows also in his plays. His plays may be traced definitely to English root. He refers often contemptuously to the "lob-worm symbolic school" of Norwegian drama. Owing little to the Continent, outside of the stimulation of examples and a push toward a sex interest, his plays are in structure and character thoroughly English. Neither in thought nor in technique does he show more than a glimmer of the ideas for which Ibsen was striving. In spite of an appearance of revolt, his plays defend the *status quo*, they go down to no absolutes of judgment, they are pungent exposés of surfaces that involve no fundamental searching. Jones has given us a picture of the English mind of the time as confused and full of moral pockets as the original, and yet it is the best picture of the middle-class mind that we have in the theatre.

As a dramatist Jones subordinates everything to a sociological interest. Though he is interested in perfecting the instrument of his craft his intellectual prepossession seems to lie outside the art in the substance of society. For this reason his work has a certain tangential twist. He seems to be aiming at some point outside of the structure of the play itself. Most of his plays have a large and carefully worked out social background in which the action itself is dwarfed. When he builds a play around a character, that character is an embodied point of view, a crux

in the social fabric. Jones's code of play construction is evolved from his own necessities rather than from a study of the well-made play or the codes of naturalism. For this reason his plays refuse to catalogue under schools or influences. He maintains throughout his career many of the characteristics of melodrama with which he began. His plays are spread over long spaces of time. The action seldom proceeds in sequence of events from beginning to end.

A mark of Jones's diagrammatic mind is found in his handling of characters. In trying to make his characters representative he has fallen into formulas. His favorite man seems to be a priestly ascetic, an artist, scientist, explorer, or minister who revolts against the frivolity of the age and yet is led with total lack of wisdom into the arms of folly. Another character is the middle-class tradesman, sufficiently prosperous, who has elected himself guardian of the morality of the community. Jones usually presents his tradesmen in groups and too often under their respectable robes they are badly spotted with sin. Above all Jones has prided himself on his women. He has given us all kinds of women except the "eternal womanly." Customary figures are a temperamental woman, a girl self-willed, a siren, an adventuress, a pagan, a woman misled by revenge, or ennui, or tipsy with frivolity. Frail as these women may be, Jones's strong man always succumbs to them. Last among his types is that of the aged baronet who has gone the "*fin de siècle*" pace and has come forth safe on the other side and is calm and understanding and helpful to

mesdames and men. Adept at putting hand on shoulder, with plenty of time from great duties to patch up domestic rows, talkative fellows, these noblemen have a certain urbane charm.

In one particular sense Jones makes his structure typical of the time. The world he presents is a show world. Its doctrine is appearances. Its punishments are meted out to those who violate the code of front. It is not hypocrisy that he attacks but the assumption that anything else is the code. Hypocrisy is the means by which the ideal is kept alive. He takes the text of *The Triumph of the Philistines* from Ecclesiastes "Be not righteous overmuch; why should'st thou destroy thyself"; and from *The Pilgrim's Scrip* for another play he quotes "Expediency is man's wisdom; doing right is God's." Taking this pragmatic doctrine, Jones adapts a code of playwriting to it. This code rejects the absolute values, asks no support from right or the sense of duty, but rests upon the law that only those who conform can be happy. The movement of most of Jones's plays is directed either to the weaving of a nice veil of appearances around dubious scenes or to showing that the bad appearances were misleading. The cardinal sins of society are in Jones's plays cardinal sins still. Courageous as he is in attacking the Philistine, he throws him no deep challenge of doctrine. Jones's doctrine of appearances is shown in the theatrical use he makes of confessions. As his final standard does not lie within the man but outside him, the final solution comes through adjustment not to one's own sense of right but to the crowd. It need

not be said that the confession scenes of *Saints and Sinners* and *Michael and his Lost Angel* have a strong theatrical value. But they have another value. A public confession is an admission of the right of the crowd to an interest in the affair. Jones's confession scenes are surrenders to philistinism. In this way his social predilections extend even to his technique.

As the characteristics of melodrama qualify all of Jones's work, it may be worth our while to ask what are the qualities of melodrama. These are: First, it is governed by force rather than by sentiment or emotion. Second, the story is developed by action, circumstance, and "machinery" rather than by the tracing of motives or personal revelation. Third, the characters are types, each one revealing the average characteristics of the group he represents. Fourth, within the types they are arranged by the most rudimentary of moral divergences. The struggle is always between the good and the bad, and all characters ally themselves with one or the other party. Fifth, the action of melodrama takes place upon a plastic stage. It involves many and rapid changes of scene and action, in following which it calls upon the assistance of the imagination. All these characteristics are found in Jones's work.

The Silver King, the most successful melodrama of modern times, was written by Jones in collaboration with Henry Herman, and produced by Wilson Barrett at the Princess's Theatre, November 16, 1882. Not in itself a work of great originality it displayed remi-

niscences of Fitzball's melodrama, *Jonathan Bradford;* of *Monte Cristo,* in the enrichment of the protagonist through a mine; of *Les Misérables,* in the element of character reform; and of German sentimental plays, in the loving parent hovering about the children he dare not acknowledge. It has all the favorite properties of melodrama in its racing stable, sailors' retreat, faithful servants, jealous and unprincipled loves, eviction for non-payment of rent, false accusations of murder, and criminals who turn informer. But with all that was old there was much that was new. There was in the play a warmth and vitality of imagination not before found, a personal pressure amounting to an intense moral outlook. The most important new note in this play was the note of conscious self-regeneration. Denver's impassioned cry, "Oh, God, put back thy Universe and give me yesterday", is rhetoric indeed, but it is rhetoric born out of the passion of life. In this note the play differs from its predecessors. It is not a case here as in *Jonathan Bradford, Lights o' London,* or *Taken from Life,* of an innocent man accused of a crime he had not committed. Denver is under the impression that he had committed the crime, and his subsequent repentance and self-redemption take their real meaning from this opinion.

Jones tells us that the success of *The Silver King* freed him to write as he pleased. In his next play, *Saints and Sinners,* produced at the Vaudeville Theatre, September 25, 1884, he assumes the rôle of the social critic. In that it threw the theatre into the arena of public discussion this play occupies a historic position.

In form the play still has characteristics of melodrama. It is a seduction play with characters balanced between the "good" and the "bad" people. It moves through nine scenes. Its spirit is rhetorical and expansive. But it goes beyond melodrama in many respects. The value of action is reduced in behalf of the value of moral intention. The characters are no longer stalking figures. Jacob Fletcher, the minister, has the literary qualities of the Vicar of Wakefield plus a modern fighting idealism. Hoggard and Prabble are Jones's symbols of the middle class. Most significant of all as a moral figure is Fanshawe. By all models Jones had simply to show Fanshawe ending as he had begun in selfish cynicism. The author gains nothing for the play by making his seducer repent. But Jones makes Fanshawe human and endows him with morality. In so doing he raises the moral value of the play. Jones consistently disclaims any influence from Ibsen. But it is difficult to see how his attack upon the respectable institutions of society can be dissociated from the influence of Ibsen's *Pillars of Society*. The play surrenders to another foreign influence in that there is added to the melodramatic movement of the play a dénouement taken from France. At the end of the play Letty dies after the fashion of the sinning heroines of French drama.

After *Hoodman Blind* (1885) and *The Noble Vagabond* (1886), both rural melodramas with nothing to commend them but crowded action and strong spirits, Jones wrote *The Middleman* (1889) and *Wealth* (1889). These plays represent Jones's attempt to treat the

modern world of industry, its capitalists and its laborers, by the methods of melodrama. The attempt was a worthy one and in the case of the first play achieved considerable success. *Wealth* was regarded by the Times as grappling more uncompromisingly than any contemporary play "with a social problem of vital interest." In Matthew Ruddock, the iron-founder, Jones created a prototype of Galsworthy's John Anthony in *Strife*. But the author had not learned to handle with restraint a serious situation. The play collapses in the third act in melodrama and madness.

Jones was attempting to discard the code of melodrama. His plays continued to be forthright and vigorous, but the author was learning to handle other formulas. He now undertook to criticize society through a key-character whose effectiveness in his environment suggests the governing motives and weaknesses of men. The character is often a woman who wreaks havoc through her handling of the weapons of sex, or he is a charlatan who prospers on society's willingness to be deceived. At first Jones tried to treat these themes in a serious way. This effort led him into many of his violations of taste. As he proceeded he learned that the motive of the temptress and the impostor require comic treatment. Then began his better studies of eccentric character and his comedy of social groups.

In *Judah* (1890) we have the first play in which Jones's rather simple moral judgments are brought into contact with perplexity. This play contains a full coterie of characteristic Jones traits. It has the

priestly hero in Judah Llewellyn, the impostor in Dethic; and the tantalizing pagan in Vashti Dethic. The theme is treated with extreme seriousness.

The Dancing Girl, produced January 15, 1891, at the Haymarket Theatre by Mr. Beerbohm Tree, displays again the characteristics of melodrama turned to moral uses. The sinning nobleman, the courageous superintendent, the heartbroken father, the "big scene", are paraphernalia of melodrama. The strong plea for social justice, the motive of character regeneration, the expiating death at the end belong to another order of play. And to another order still belongs the character of the "pagan" Drusilla, one of the first embodiments of the "right to life" motive in English drama. Drusilla is a carefully drawn type of the woman tempter. But we cannot escape the idea that she is something more. She is an embodiment of the testing and disintegrating forces of the present day. Love has now become more than a romantic episode. It has become a test of the fiber of the individual. Herein lies one explanation of the frequent treatment of sex in recent plays. It is not only that sex takes a large place in life, but that in sex attraction and repulsion there can be epitomized the attractions and repulsions of social intercourse. Drusilla represents the downfall of the Duke of Guisebury, and through him the suffering of the whole island dependent upon him and the jeopardizing of explorers in the Arctic circle. As Guisebury clears her out of his life his character becomes stronger. Finally the neglected breakwaters of his life are all rebuilt.

With *The Tempter* (1893), a verse play in which he follows Wills and Gilbert in trying to adapt the Mephisto motive to the nineteenth century, Jones's period of melodrama comes to an end. Before he finally achieved a competent handling of comedy he created another type of play to which one may apply the title the "house in order" play. The idea of tables turned is one of the commonest in drama. Jones applies this turn of plot to social and moral issues, endowing it with a significance in character probing that had not before been seen. This interest is found in *Saints and Sinners*. It is found again in *Michael and His Lost Angel* and *The Hypocrites*. Pinero uses it in *His House in Order* and with greater technical variety in *The Gay Lord Quex*.

On *Michael and His Lost Angel* few critics agree. Some place it at the head of Jones's work. Others consider it one of the poorest of his plays. In structure it is solid and workmanlike, but its theme is forced and its temper bitter. The characters are Jones's conventional figures of the ascetic and the temptress. Neither Michael nor Audrie is a real character. They are driven into the action by the author's force. The dialogue is lyrical with a note of awe and pity. The author has done all possible to endow the play with tragedy except to give it truth and significance. As it is, all we can see in it is the sordid downfall of weaklings. Even in structure the play is highly mechanical. The situation turns back upon itself in the most arbitrary way. The outcome of the play is reached only by many coincidences, and

not even the author's word will make us believe in the death of Audrie.

Jones's most significant forward step was taken when he undertook the comedy of social groups. It must have become evident to him that for severe social censure neither romance nor melodrama was appropriate. At the end of the century there had developed a spirit of recklessness, of moral release, of cynical materialism not unlike that of two centuries before. For the treatment of this mood the high and cold conventions of comedy of manners were necessary. Jones proceeds to undertake for his time the task of Congreve. His comedies compare with Congreve's as the forthright vulgarity of the nineteenth century compares with the graceful naughtiness of the seventeenth.

Jones began his comedy career in *The Crusaders* (1891), a bluff satire on the reform movements in the England of the end of the century. Again we have a priestly "Shelley from Peckham Rye", wise enough to evolve a scheme to reform London, but not wise enough to protect himself in a silly intrigue; we have the crudely conceived caricatures, Palsam, and Figg and Jawle; we have Lord Burnham, a statesman of infinite patience. Behind an inconsequential story we gain a good sense of the quarrels, the compromises, the ineffectiveness of organized reform. *The Triumph of the Philistines* (1895) was a criticism of the attitude of the English people toward art. There is no doubt that the author had in mind another art than sculpture, over which Mr. Jorgan was at the time exercising a good deal of control. Over against the caricatures of Jorgan

and Skewett, Wapes, Blagg, and their fellows, and Miss Soar, he places one of his unique creations, Sally Lebrune, presumably a French girl, but in reality a figure representing his idea of the free joyousness of life. Sally is almost impossibly a puppet. The author uses her to effect his favorite trick of "turning the tables" on Mr. Jorgan. Sir Valentine is the most healthy example of Jones's "transcendental" style of hero. He is the one hero of this type who is enriched by his experiences.

The Rogue's Comedy (1896) belongs to the class of impostor plays of which *Judah* is the first example. It is the rather patent story of Bailey Prothero, a society fortune teller, and reveals some of the sterner stuff that underlies the tinsel of the fakir. Actually this is a piece of foolery on the credulity of men and their wild passion for speculation, and the organization of companies of whatever kind. This is one of the most sustained of Jones's comedies.

The Masqueraders (1894) is, among all Jones's comedies, the one which most challenges comparison with the great comedies of the language. One feels in the atmosphere of this play something of the hard note of Congreve's *The Way of the World.* In it the author's imagination is almost free from the limitations of his fixed ideas. He seems to be here more of the observer, more of the dramatist than elsewhere. We have again the familiar types. Dulcie Larondie is a pagan plus moral sensibilities. David Remon is of the large family of Michael and Judah. Though an astronomer and experienced man of the world, he can philosophi-

cally discount the value of all things, make himself the slave of a barmaid, and win her faithful love in return. The play is supported by some scenes of very great stress. This critic does not agree with those who rail at Montagu auctioning off the kisses of a barmaid or at that stronger scene of the game of cuts by which Dulcie Larondie is finally won to David. In this comedy at least Jones's liberal plan of construction, covering years of time and a continent in space, is justified. The play is a revelation both of a society and a man, a society whose standards have collapsed under frivolous ideas, a man who has built up a wall of chaffing around his own quiet. All the characters are true; they are like detail shadows playing at money-making, love, and politics. The engagement between Monty and Lady Clarice is a masterpiece of observation of two unloving but keen people. Aside from the end of the play, which does not sustain its promise, this is one of the best modern English comedies.

The Case of Rebellious Susan (1894) treats in a comic spirit situations which would appear more dangerous if found in a French play. As here practiced Jones's doctrine of appearances operates against absolute honesty in the play. He enunciates the theory, "As woman cannot retaliate openly, let her retaliate secretly — and lie." But the force that denies her the right to retaliate openly in life denies it in a play, so Jones never tells us how far Susan has gone. We know only that the hero is another of his gallery of "strong, silent" men, that among the characters appear Pylus and Elain Shrimpton, both caricatures, and that the com-

plaisant and helpful baronet appears again in Sir Richard.

The vigorous note of *The Masqueraders* is found again in *The Liars* (1897). Less effective than *The Masqueraders* in that the play starts with a social group, interest is gradually centered in a very commonplace intrigue. Falkner, the puritan Don Quixote, does not bear comparison with Remon. He is one of Jones's best prigs. But if Falkner does not win friends, the same cannot be said for Jessica. She is a perfectly observed specimen of the selfish woman who plays with her life and honor. Without power either of love or of sacrifice, she has the gift only of appearances and of untruth. Other excellent characters are those of the Nepean brothers. Strong, simple, tenacious, not clever, these brothers stand four-square to reality. The author's interest here lies behind the intrigue itself in the successive rings of society that are drawn into it by one lie. Before the end of the play is reached, a whole neighborhood has been honeycombed with falsehood.

The Manœuvres of Jane (1898) is a study of the character of a young woman. Here is a play that goes to the heart of many relationships between children and their parents, and young women and their lovers. There is in the young a compelling force that works their ends. As you deal with them, see that you placate that force. For it will make its own plans. This play is half farce, half intrigue play. Again, as in *Michael and his Lost Angel*, a compromising situation is secured through a boat excursion.

Mrs. Dane's Defence (1900) is Jones's best serious play because the most specific. In this play there is no burden of floating ideas. It is a close and orderly study of a concrete situation among men and women. The action is more economical than is usual in the Jones play, covering only three weeks. The play is the first utilization in the theatre of the tense atmosphere of a courtroom at a time of cross-examination. There is no real struggle between characters. The struggle is one of wits, and interest is equally divided between speculation as to the outcome and interest in operations of contending minds. The story of the play had been told before in Wilkie Collins's *The New Magdalen*. It is that of a sinning woman who attempts in a new community to live down her errors. The play has several good characters. The helpful baronet here finds his best use in Sir Daniel, the kindly cross-examiner who uncovers the truth.

Mrs. Dane's Defence was produced in 1900. Since that date Jones has written *Whitewashing Julia* (1903); *Joseph Entangled* (1904); *The Hypocrites* (1906); *Dolly Reforming Herself* (1908); *The Divine Gift* (1913), and half a dozen other plays. Among these, *Dolly Reforming Herself* has the best comedy spirit. *The Divine Gift* is smoothly written but is dull. The truth is, Jones has not added to his reputation during the new century. Plenty of technical objections could always be raised to his work. The number of overseen embraces in Jones's plays speaks ill for the discretion if not the manners of his characters. He has often obtruded his extra-artistic purpose. Sometimes he has

lost his temper. But the fact remains that he has always been a way-breaker, a vigorous fighter for good things when these were hard to fight for. As a comedian he has the strongest hand since the Restoration comedians and by no means the least subtle. As a valiant fighter for standards, he has been a specific for the stage.

CHAPTER VII

Arthur Wing Pinero

In the theatrical history of the last thirty years the names of Jones and Pinero have always been associated. This has arisen from no similarity in their work; it has come from the complementary character of their genius. Where Jones is the outside worker in the theatre, Pinero is the inside worker. As time passes Jones's position may come to depend largely on the work he has done in the reform of the theatre as a social institution. The position of Pinero must always depend alone upon his work as a playwright.

The era to which both these men belonged closed with the end of the century. Both represented in their work the first application of the new standards to the theatre. By necessity the work of each was a pioneering work. For this reason both soon found themselves pressed upon by crowds of followers. Though both of them continued to write plays after 1900, their most significant work was done in the fifteen years that precede the end of the century.

Several qualities distinguish Pinero as the pioneer of new technical methods. The first of these is that he

is distinctly a dramatist of the theatre. He is an expert whose first concern is in rendering more efficient the tools of his craft. He is continually experimenting on new formulas for widening the scope of his art. This absorption in craftsman matters gives him a little of the professional air. He has some of the heartlessness of the specialist. He remembers always that he is writing for actors; he is careful to put his plays into form ready for their use. One of his best characteristics is his possession of a technical conscience. He has never willingly produced shoddy or incomplete work. A second characteristic of Pinero is that he creates men and women excellently, but thoughts only indifferently. This explains his failure when he starts his play with an idea, and his invariable success when he starts with a group of people. He lacks what Fyfe calls "an ingrained habit of mind" or "steadfast persistency of vision." And Pinero's third most noticeable trait is a tendency to apply to the theatre the standards of literature. As naturalism was refined, it tended to take upon itself a literary standard, the standard of the steady surface of writing instead of the broken surface of action. Pinero shows this not only in the style of his dialogue, which is often too well turned for speech. He shows it in an identification of all of his symbols with the symbols of the page of print. No first-rate dramatist of the time uses so little the extra-literary appeals of setting, action, and unvoiced mood. These things being said, one needs to add that from the start Pinero has represented the best traditions of the stage. He came into the theatre

under the influence of Irving and the Bancrofts. His career has been one of successive adaptations of the work of the artist to the best demands of the time.

Arthur Wing Pinero, the son of a lawyer and grandson of a teller of the Exchequer, was himself destined for the law but went on the stage at nineteen with Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Wyndham in Edinburgh. This engagement was followed by one at Liverpool, and in 1876 he joined Irving's Lyceum Company, playing utility parts. After five years with Irving, he joined Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft at the Haymarket Theatre in the season of 1881–1882. He did not distinguish himself as an actor in either company, but Mr. Bancroft tells that he gave a remarkably good performance of Diggory in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. Pinero left the Bancroft company in 1882 to devote himself to writing. After the production of *£200 a Year* (1877) at the Globe, his employer Irving gave him £50 for a little curtain raiser, *Daisy's Escape* (1879). Irving also played his *Bygones* and *Hester's Mystery*. All of these were serious plays. Pinero's first important play was *The Money Spinner*, presented at the St. James's Theatre, January 8, 1881, by Mr. Hare and the Kendals, and played in two acts on account of the daring nature of the scene in the gambling saloon in the first act. His next play, *The Squire*, was brought out by the same producers December 29 of the same year. Pinero gained critical approval immediately. In 1886 Archer hailed him as the most original and remarkable of living English playwrights, with the possible exception of Gilbert.

Like many others of his time, Pinero's prentice work was done in adaptation. There had been some charge that for *The Squire* he was indebted to Thomas Hardy's novel, *Far From the Madding Crowd*. In the face of the author's denial and his offering of his notebooks, the charge fell to the ground, but thereafter Pinero was very careful that no such question should arise. *Lords and Commons*, produced at the Haymarket Theatre, October 24, 1883, by Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, was an adaptation of the Swedish story *Mannen af Börd och Qvinnan af Folket* by Marie Sophie Schwartz. The story is that of a nobleman who repudiates a bride whom he discovers to be illegitimate. It utilizes the familiar device found in Kotzebue's *The Stranger* and thereafter in many other plays and tales of a person moving unknown in a circle to which he had formerly belonged. Other adaptations are *The Ironmaster* (1884) from George Ohnet's *Le Maître de Forges*, already known in an unauthorized adaptation by Buchanan; and *Mayfair* (1885) from Sardou's *Maison Neuve*, a play of striking situations but quite unlike Pinero's usual style. Two other plays of the apprentice period are *The Rector* (1883) and *Low Water* (1884). In the first play the author undertakes to use the device of surprise. The audience is led through an action assailing the honor of a good woman, the wife of a rector, only to find at the end that the accusation is that of a madman. *Low Water*, though not a success, shows the author's demand for better things. There were no technical tricks. A betrayed woman fights her situation through with patience and in the end

marries the man who had deserted her. On account of its theme, the play was called immoral. It was in fact moral beyond the code of the day. Pinero disavowed the play after its production, claiming that it had been produced against his protest and under conditions to obscure its meaning. To the year 1884 belongs the play *The Weaker Sex*, which was not produced until 1888. The play deals with an artificial theme, that of a mother and daughter in love with the same man. It is treated with dexterity and sympathy. For this play as well as for his later *The Profligate*, Pinero provided an alternative ending the better to comport with truth, and to satisfy the demands of his audiences.

Pinero finally discovered himself in farce. Only in the seventies had farce developed from the one-act vaudeville of doors and closets into a three-act play based upon some observation of character. The influence of Labiche and the German von Moser had introduced eccentricity into farce and even some element of manners and humors. One of the first three-act farces was *The Great Divorce Case*, produced by Alexander Henderson in 1877 at the Criterion. A famous naughty English farce which successfully affronted Mrs. Grundy was *Pink Dominoes* (1877). As modern English farce developed, we find it falling into the eccentric farce of Edward Terry and the polite farce of Charles Wyndham. And not the least important stage in modern English farce is that stage which is represented by Pinero's Court Theatre series of farces of the eighties.

As practiced by the best writers, farce is a highly conventionalized form. It carries a definite set of standards and has a certain representative value as a formalized commentary on men. Far from being a form of haphazard entertainment, farce demands a code of consistency beyond that of the "well-made" play. Pinero holds that farce shows us probable people doing possible things. This may be explained by saying that farce is the result of the application to the play of a convention of logic beyond the standards of everyday human practice. As a matter of fact, human nature is not logical, and personality varies according to our greater or lesser modification of the codes of logic in human affairs. As a rule the theatre deals only with those actions which lie outside of logic, or as we say, the "human" actions. But farce deals with the incongruity between logic and life. Farce holds people to the pursuit of the conclusions involved in their premises. The improbable things people do in farce are those logical things which in real life they would escape by throwing logic overboard. Being caught in a net of circumstances the real person would withdraw or explain. Not so the consistent character in farce. He pushes forward on his path until he has reached the human reduction to the absurd.

Through his handling of farce, Pinero gained his command of the stage. In this he first began to handle real human nature. In *The Rocket* (1883), written for Edward Terry, we have the story of Chevalier Walkinshaw, whose fortunes go up like a rocket when a young girl he passes off as his daughter becomes engaged to a

wealthy suitor, and come down like a stick when she is shown to be the daughter of a comedy personage. In *Independence* and *In Chancery* (1884) we have two further farces of situation. The Court Theatre series of farces begins with *The Magistrate* and extends up to the time that the increased expertness of the author's observation influenced him to merge the art of farce into that of comedy, to exchange hard logic for the playful spirit of fantasy. *The Magistrate* (1885) is based upon the device of a woman's understatement of her age. This device is quite acceptable. And it is true enough that circumstances in the figure of a growing son will come unceasingly to contest her statement. *The Schoolmistress* (1886) and *Dandy Dick* (1887) are based upon traits of character which are in themselves true and human, but as treated are carried to improbable extremes.

After *Dandy Dick*, Pinero introduces other elements into his farces which almost carry them over to other forms of drama. During this period he was writing *Sweet Lavender* and *The Profligate*, and the sentimental strains of the one and the moral passions of the other enter into his lighter forms. In *The Hobby Horse* (1886) he writes a play on the vagaries of false philanthropy that has some of the flavor of H. A. Jones's later *The Crusaders*. The horsey characters, though belonging to an old and popular type, are not unlike Jones's middle-class figures. Pinero had stepped out of farce into sentimental comedy. Likewise, though *The Cabinet Minister* (1890) was called a farce, it varied from the earlier farces in that it was a whimsical treatment

of a serious subject. Pinero was striking his roots more deeply into human nature. He was attempting to add to the cold logic of farce a warmer note of human commentary or emotion. This tendency is seen in his treatment some years later of the theme of *The Amazons* (1893), a play based upon a device that offers farcical possibilities. But with a deeper sympathy than he has shown before, Pinero loses interest in the farce possibilities of his theme in his tender searching out of the heart of a mother, and the budding womanhood of three charming girls. Circumstance here stands not only for the logic of events, but for the logic of a sweet and full human nature learning in due time its lessons of love and tenderness and discarding the well-made plans of the past.

Much water has passed over the wheel since Polonius classified the plays of his youth as "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral." Though this classification was not exact, after three centuries we have not been able to make a classification that pleases all comers. The critic who attempts to classify plays falls into the same confusion as the critic who attempts to classify men and for the same reason.

Under such circumstances the simplest division is the best. Such a classification throws plays into the two classes of serious drama and comedy. In serious plays some course of action is presumed to have a binding effect upon the fortunes of the characters, an effect they cannot escape on account of a fusing of

external circumstance with internal character. In comedy this course of action is shown to have only a temporary effect. The relationship between the internal and the external is flexible and subject to adjustment without pain.

Now under naturalism comedy is likely to be better than the serious play. This is because it is demanded of every work of art that it be true not only to itself but to all relevant things. It is easier to make comedy representative than tragedy because comedy is less likely to involve outside associations. It is difficult to write a true serious play according to the conventions of naturalism for the reason that it is difficult to find a set of concrete facts that adjust themselves to abstract truth. While it is perfectly possible to show a set of conditions culminating in the death of the chief figure of a serious play, the work can have no significance unless these conditions are representative. In the case of a serious play we are bound to ask, "Is this true of things in general? Is this death, this downfall, representative in a large sense of the course of nature?" If it is not, the play becomes a piece of special pleading quite outside the domain of art. In the case of comedy, because it is more detached, because its action is temporary and subject to adjustment, it is not so difficult to find a plot that bears the stamp of truth. For comedy we ask only "Are the facts as given true? Are they truthfully interpreted?" On this account, and because naturalism has not worked out as yet a code for the harmony of the concrete facts of a limited action and the universal truth of its conclusion, comedy

is the better form outside of the tragedy of the Greeks and of Shakespeare.

These considerations strike one with particular force in considering Pinero's work. He undertook comedy and serious plays at about the same time. He continues to write both throughout his career. And yet in his handling of comedy he is far more a master than he is in the handling of serious plays. To the handling of comedy Pinero came with lessons learned. He had developed an observing eye; he had learned the rules of objectivity; he could built a structure remarkable for balance and economy. When we consider Pinero's comedies we find that he handled two distinct types of comedy and that he handled them with equal mastery. We have seen that Pinero received his early tuition in the company for which Robertson had evolved a highly specialized art form. Robertson was the chief modern representative of the school of sentimental comedy. Pinero's attitude toward sentiment is of peculiar interest in that his comedies fall into two groups, in the one of which the action is dominated by the mellow motives of simple emotion, and in the other this emotion is denied and inverted.

Of these two groups the sentimental came earlier, but it finds isolated expression as late as *Letty* (1903). Sentiment with Pinero, as with his master Robertson, was never the warm overflow of Dickens's feeling. It was rather the quaint sympathy and insight of Thackeray. Even in his farces *The Hobby Horse* and *The Cabinet Minister,* critics had discerned a serious and a lingering note. In other plays of the same period

the element of farce was either greatly reduced or excluded altogether. Appropriately enough, Pinero's first success outside of farce was secured in the pure sentimental genre for which he was indebted to Robertson. In *Sweet Lavender* (1888) there are many traces of *Society* and *Caste*. It would seem that this play was almost consciously an exercise in an older form of playwriting. More than any other of Pinero's plays it was based upon a sentimental motive. And *The Times* (1891), though beginning as farce and ending as social satire, was in fact a sentimental comedy. The play reveals an ironic note of social commentary not unlike that of the comedies of Jones softened with a regard for the sentimental values of the action. *Trelawney of the "Wells"* (1898), written long after Pinero had taken a high place as the writer of serious plays, again returns to Robertson, to whom it must be considered a tribute. It too hangs upon a sentimental theme. The difference of social ranks shown in *Caste* and *Society* is seen here in the contrast between the care-free Bohemian life of the circuit-actors and the heavy atmosphere of the Gower Street household. But this is something more than mere sentimental comedy. It most demands respect in that it is a beautiful specimen of a difficult form, the historical comedy. As a rule comedy demands a contemporaneous note. It is difficult to realize the issues of the action unless this is placed in the midst of the present. But Pinero achieves with remarkable precision the atmosphere of the crinoline days, and without any allusions to historical data brings before us a sentimental theme, the circumstances

of which had been dead for a generation. The play is a loving picture of the life of actors in the days of the breaking up of the circuit. In the character of the young dramatist, Tom Wrench, Pinero gives clear expression to the ideals that were remaking the drama of England. Many years later, in writing *Letty* (1903), Pinero returned to the mood of Robertson in providing an atmosphere in which to place his affecting study of a woman's surrender to a forbidden love.

But if Pinero owes allegiance to Robertson as one of his masters of comedy, he is influenced as well by the drier and more ironic wit of Gilbert. And the latter is the influence that seems to have adapted itself more nearly to his own outlook as an artist. Critics soon discovered in Pinero that same *mauvais honte* in the treatment of the sentiments of love that they had found in Gilbert. The emotions of comradeship, the human frailties and little virtues, the pride and longing and fears of parents he could treat with a ready pen. But the glow of young love he could never take seriously. This was no mere perversity. It was a quality of his delicacy of taste and his instinct for truth. It arose from his refusal to see life through other men's eyes and to see it in only one quality. He saw it in a combination of qualities. His plays are unusual for the sense of depth he secures in character. The immature figures of the Victorian love story have no place in his work. His characters are men and women of many planes of motive and action.

Out of these characteristics there came two of Pinero's most exquisite forms of comedy. Fantasy arises from

the application to the harder outlines of comedy of the softer graces of poetic imagination. Fantasy is no less rigorous than comedy. There is in it nothing of the haphazard or the inconsequent. It subjects the actions of men to the playful treatment of fancy. Its purpose is the uncovering of the more remote spaces of human character. And the other type of comedy is what may be called sophisticated comedy, or what the French call *comédie rosse*. This form of comedy appeals particularly to an artificial society in which the normal emotions of men are concealed or inverted. The sophisticated comedy is one of hard surfaces. Of *comédie rosse*, Filon says in his little volume *De Dumas à Rostand:* "Comédie rosse is not that style in which the heroine plays the villain's rôle. The *rosserie* applies to all the characters. It consists in a lack of conscience, a kind of vicious ingenuity, the state of mind of people who have never had a sense of morality, who live always in mixed issues or in injustice as a fish lives in water. . . . A reign of evil is established without apparent change in the familiar relationships of society, or in everyday language." As far as this type of comedy applies to England, it develops out of a dulling of the moral sense through selfishness or cupidity rather than through passion.

Both of these forms of comedy are a result of a high development of the comic spirit. In *Lady Bountiful* (1891) and *The Princess and the Butterfly* (1897), Pinero wrote two beautiful plays of the fantastic order. In each case the theme is one that might have been attacked full-handed with satire or with sentiment —

in the one case, humanitarian activities; in the other, the illusion of growing old. The author's exquisite skill is shown in what he avoids as well as in what he embraces. In *The Princess and the Butterfly* the illusion that it is too late for love is not corrected by the more pathetic illusion that youth lasts always; the antidote is a genial recognition that there is a love for all ages, and the later may be no less dear than the earlier.

But it is in sophisticated comedy that Pinero reaches the heights of his achievement. The marks of Pinero's sophisticated comedy are two: a delicacy and tact in treating the heartlessness of men; a hardness and taciturnity in dealing with their tenderer virtues. The unmoral young person had been introduced by Gilbert as a substitute for the sentimental young person. Sophisticated comedy was the result of the application of an unmoral method to the action of the play. Its attitude is that of the watcher, who withholds judgment on moral values. It is particularly effective for the telling of a daring story, the action of which takes place in some neutral region which would be obscured by an insistence upon moral values. The theme of such a play is judged altogether as a revelation of men, and not for the philosophy it enunciates. In some such way *The Gay Lord Quex* (1899) is to be considered. It has its commentary value no doubt, but the consideration of this is likely to blind us to the artistry that made it a hard and brilliant fabric of tempered wits. The play is important not as showing a certain philosophy of life, as representing frivolity, but as

showing how a set of trained intelligences, all developed selfishly and for the ends of their own pleasure, would act under a given set of circumstances. That the characters are true there is no doubt. That the story represents the author's view of life need not be believed. The story as it is given to us is as much better than life in wit and the technique of living as it is lower than life in morals. We are no more called upon to applaud Quex's reform at the end than to reprehend his low standards at the beginning. The play exists in a zone of pure thought, and it is as a fabric of design that the work remains one of the most notable in the language.

Pinero has written several comedies since *The Gay Lord Quex*, but the only one that compares with it is *The Thunderbolt* (1908). The moral fabric of this play is even harder than that of *The Gay Lord Quex*. By this play we are introduced into a group from which all moral principles had been expelled by avarice. The author calls this an *Episode in the History of a Provincial Family*. In construction it is one of the most closely woven of English comedies. It is written with hard restraint. The author attempts to throw no shadow beyond the little group of selfish men and women who have met to open the will of their deceased relative. No character is permitted to escape the author's revealing scrutiny. Only one of the characters is treated with any sympathy. All the others are assayed under his test as blatant, brutal, hypocritical, avaricious. The theme is worthy of a Balzac: the power of the idea of money to debase the souls of the men and women

of a family. It is handled with Balzac's passion for reality, and with more than his ingenuity. The play had only a limited success upon the stage. The work is so concentrated, the characters are so real, the climax lies so much in the realm of sardonic imagination, as to elevate the play beyond the instrumentalities of the stage.

Of Pinero's other comedies, *A Wife without a Smile* (1904), *Preserving Mr. Panmure* (1911), *The "Mind the Paint" Girl* (1912), *The Widow of Wasdale Head* (1912), *Play-goers* (1913), it is sufficient to say that in one way or another each has provided the artist scope for the exercise of his lighter moods and for the display of his skill. In them the author has used a small palette with dainty colors, there is little story, but much display of rarer moods and of personality.

We have been so careful to reveal Pinero as a master technician that there will be some interest in inquiring how this man came to harness his art to the construction of the play of ideas. We shall find that when he comes to the play of ideas, he begins again his novitiate, and that in the treatment of the serious play he advanced not by the continued development of ideas but by the gradual subordination of ideas to action.

Pinero's first two serious plays of his mature period, *The Profligate* (1889) and *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893), belong to the class of ill-digested ideas. The first sign of the irrelevance of the theses is seen in the fact that the ideas, such as they were, were but added to a plot which had existed for years without them. Nothing was more common in the nineteenth century

than what one may call the "sin-coming-back" type of play. In the older play the sin usually came back in the form of an accusing victim or a child. Even the scheme that brought in an old intrigue to complicate a new love had been used as lately as Grundy's *In Honour Bound* from Scribe's *Une Chaine.* It is probable that Pinero was influenced to deal with a social topic through the vogue of problems in the drama of Germany, France, and Norway. He began his writing of serious plays on the doctrine of determinism with which George Eliot had begun the composition of novels thirty years before. He holds social morality to be subject to a scientific statement as simple and diagrammatic as Novalis's doctrine, "Character is fate." The idea that humanity is a homogeneous organism, that consequences cannot be lost, but may be traced through the mass, is a nice scheme mechanically. It serves the drama very well because it makes it easy to bolster up a particular circumstance by reference to organic law. The limitations of this code are that it too thoroughly limits the powers of the world to the known forces of humanity. It quite neglects any action by chance, by mysterious intervention, or by a spirit of events outside the ascertainable forces of men. It tries to make a tragedy of divine vengeance without any Divinity. More than this, in order to point its moral, it narrows the circle of action and reaction to a smaller compass in area and time than experience approves. Excellently as this system adapts itself to the construction of plots, there is no truth in such an episode beyond the limits of its own story. Neither

Ghosts, Rosmersholm, The Profligate, nor *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* is a modern tragedy. They are distressing stories about unhappy people whose fates have little application to life in general.

It is worthy of notice that as Pinero developed in the artistry of the serious play, he gave up any desire to throw a light on great moral causes and satisfied himself with the study of a particular action. *The Profligate, The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* and *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* are the only plays in which he surrenders to an extra-artistic control. In *The Benefit of the Doubt,* in *Iris,* and in *Mid-Channel* he becomes again merely an observer and teller of tales.

The Profligate was produced at the Garrick Theatre, April 24, 1889, with a notable cast: John Hare as Lord Dangars; Forbes-Robertson as Dunstan Renshaw; Lewis Waller as Hugh Murray; Miss Kate Rorke as Leslie Brudenell; Miss Olga Nethersole as Janet Preece. The play was immediately recognized as a serious piece of dramatic writing. The author was evidently undertaking to establish in dramatic form the moral law, "What a man sows that shall he also reap." He states this law in the story of a young man, Dunstan Renshaw, who, having lived a profligate's life, is surprised on the eve of his wedding to a woman he dearly loves by the young woman he had wronged. In the productions of the play the author used two endings, the one involving the death of Renshaw by suicide, the other his forgiveness by his girl bride. The author intends that the second ending shall seem no less tragic than the first. At this time

the matter of the ending of a play was receiving much critical consideration. There had been so much artificiality in bringing the curtain down happily that by many it was presumed that anything that ended unhappily was for this reason artistic. This conclusion by no means follows. The truth is that very few situations in the present dispensation permit of the tragic ending either of death or despair. The dominant tone of philosophy and science is one of hope and rebuilding. Death comes only when one pits his strength against these spirits. Quite properly *Iris* ends unhappily because Iris refuses to ally herself with the principles of normal and healthy life. As she refuses to swim against the current, she is drawn down with the current. But there was every disposition in Renshaw to swim. Before the author can arrive at either one of the dooms assigned, he has to answer in the affirmative two questions: First, has Renshaw shown himself without redeeming quality? Second, is Leslie shown to be of a totally unforgiving nature? The answer to the first is found in the love of the man for the woman and his sense of sin before her. The answer to the second is contained in the character of the girl. Striking testimony as to what Leslie would do is contained in the reaction of another pure young girl to the same situation. When Ellean in the next play is asked whether she can forgive Captain Ardale, she makes an answer that goes far to invalidate the thesis upon which the play itself is built. She will forgive him, because in spite of his fault, he has been a brave man, but even more because she loves him. The conclusion is

forced upon us that whereas Pinero undertook to write a tragedy he failed to do so.

Feeling, perhaps, that he had in *The Profligate* failed to make his situation universally significant, the author makes careful efforts to do so in *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. In *The Profligate* the action of the play is set at a point at the end of the episode. The author had not permitted us to validate his conclusions by a study of the characters over a long period of time. In *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* he explicitely states the problem at the beginning and suffers us to follow out its realization. The theme is complementary to that of *The Profligate*. It begins with the problem of this play as it would be at the time of the marriage of Leslie and Renshaw, though in the second play the guilt is transferred from the man to the woman. The theme is this: Can a marriage between a prostitute and a good man be made a success, granted that the husband knows the wife's past and is determined to help her to redeem it? This question Pinero answers in the negative for the same reason he had so answered in the former play — because the past comes back. It is clear that his answer does not cover the situation. The answer does not lie in the inconvenient habit of the past to come back but in the character of the woman. This may be illustrated in the quite vulgar theme of Augier's *Mariage d'Olympe*. Here the question is: Can a man marry a courtesan without suffering for it? And the answer is, he cannot if she remain a courtesan. And this Olympe does quite simply. She is the same scheming ambitious prostitute after

her marriage that she had been before, and her end comes expeditiously as the result of a train of circumstances that have no general meaning beyond impressing the maxim, "Don't marry a light woman." Pinero adds a social and a moral value to the story and in so doing confuses its issues. In the first place Paula is not a courtesan. At any rate she does not remain so. She neither returns to her old ways nor does she convince us that she had been heart and soul in them at any time. It is clear that if a blow is to fall it must come not from her persistent viciousness but from her pathetic effort to clean off her spots.

What will be the forces that will hinder her from cleaning off her spots? They will lie inside of her in her own character; and they will lie outside of her in society. As for herself, there is no lack of will to correct herself; she has no leanings toward a relapse. And society offers but a slight problem. Her husband and Cayley are kindness itself. At the worst, county society is cold. There was nothing in the large forces either within her or without her to make a failure of the experiment. The first signs of failure come from the little things, — the perverted, sensitive, loving character of Paula herself, frustrate by her own inability to reach to the moral standards of those about her, the careless society that affronts her more by ignoring her than by snubs, and her inability to get the love of a cold young girl. It is the failure in these little things that brings about the end. It is not inconceivable that the very meanness of its tawdry failure might have brought Paula to the suicide that the author

forces by sterner means. In showing this failure, Pinero used the best gifts of his psychology. Nothing can excel the sympathetic and incisive laboratory work he has done on the characters of Paula and Aubrey and Cayley. If it had ended with this, there could have been no caviling at the theme. The old lover was introduced in order to enforce the drama and not the thought. While it looked like a moral, it was in fact a theatric requirement. This return (not to speak of the antecedent fact) is so improbable as to lose validity. The theatric catastrophe arises not from society nor from herself but from unrepresentative accident. It illustrates Frederick Wedmore's words, "The radical defect of would-be-serious play-writing (is) the defect that at a critical moment there is sometimes a ready, sometimes an unwilling, sacrifice of dramatic truth to mere theatrical need." The result is that while we are compelled to accept the outcome of the play, we cannot accept it for the reasons given or as having any meaning outside itself.

"The limitations of Mrs. Tanqueray are really the limitations of the dramatic form", writes William Archer, and Filon was of the opinion that "the piece enlarges the province of the theatre." Though we cannot agree with the first, we must agree with the second as far as England is concerned. A new era in modern English drama dates from the performance of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.*

Pinero made one more attempt at the play of ideas in *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* (1895). If at any point in his career wisdom and discretion have left

Pinero, it was while planning this play. It was a period of abnormal interest in Ibsen. Pinero had discovered that he could write serious plays, that he could throw ideas on the table for the wise to wag their heads over, that it is possible for a story to carry deeply-concealed meanings. All these things are found in the next play. He has discovered that woman and sex are problems. The play is full of Ibsenisms vaguely transplanted, Mrs. Thorne and her dead boy, Agnes and the Bible, Agnes the atheist, the power of sex over a man. The play was a failure, and Pinero did not repeat his venture in untried regions.

But if *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* showed the play of ideas gone to seed, *The Benefit of the Doubt* shows Pinero's serious art cleared of impeding theories. Among Pinero's works this play occupies the position that *Mrs. Dane's Defence* holds among Jones's works. Both plays are dramatist's plays. They represent the serious treatment of a social group for its own sake and for the power it generates, without sentimentality, or passion, or bitterness. In both plays intellect governs. Both are fabrics of fighting wits. Perhaps no more delightfully true group has been brought together than this handful of ordinary unheroic people, — the dull Fraser, his flighty wife Theo, the jealous Mrs. Allingham, the worldly-wise Mrs. Cloys, and Sir Fletcher Portwood, cocky and self-assertive. The nearest any of them come to heroism is when they act by the illusion of heroism. No one is the center of the play. The author plays his light over one and all, even down to the servants. There is no one problem.

The Benefit of the Doubt represents the region of half-thinking, half-willing, resting on good-enough in which many people live. In exposition it gets away from the formal exposition of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. The play had only a relative success on the stage. It was too cynical and sophisticated for ordinary interest.

In *Iris* Pinero takes another step forward in technique. It is to be noticed that as he perfects his medium, his powers of popular appeal decrease. Since 1900 Pinero has been the dramatist of the discriminating few. Even those critics who refuse Pinero any credit are enthusiastic for *Iris*. *Iris* is a study of a weak woman. Recognizing that most plays are based upon the theory of the contest of wills, he evolves a play that demands no such clash. The play is in fact a chronicle of a woman's life. She is seen to drift from episode to episode without forethought or volition. In structure the play has more the sequence of a series of chapters of a novel than the architecture of a drama. It is supported by two conventional expedients: the first, the device by which at the outset Iris is bound by the will of her dead husband to remain single if she is to retain her fortune; and the second, the arbitrary blow by which she loses her fortune. Here again the theatric requirement blows an unnecessarily loud blast for truth, but the use of these devices should not blind us to the force of the story.

Of *His House in Order* it is unnecessary to say anything except that its name indicates the type of play to which it belongs. *Mid-Channel* (1909) is Pinero's

last serious work. In this play he governed himself absolutely by standards of rigorous artistry. Though the play is presumed to carry no significance beyond its own borders, it stands beside *Iris* and *The Thunderbolt* as expanding our vision of human nature. This play is what *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* might have been if treated without theatricality, — a patient study of petty events and annoyances taking on themselves great significance in the mind of a neurasthenic woman and leading her to suicide. Though one finds himself disposed to haggle over the details of Zoe Blundell's death, he has to recognize that no one of these brought it about. The author is careful to distribute these all about her. Though she knows that she must die, it is to be doubted whether the woman herself knows where the train started. And after all, it all lies in her sick brain, a brain suffering from the malady of *Mid-Channel.*

While Pinero has received the rewards of his works, it is doubtful whether our own times can estimate his position. Naturally there has been some disposition to depreciate his services as well as those of Henry Arthur Jones. That will not be the disposition of the future critic. It is more likely that Pinero will be hailed as one of the first masters of the technique of English comedy. He has shown command over more varieties of dramatic form than any other English dramatist. As in the case of Jones, most of Pinero's work was done before 1900. Even the noisy claims of his successors only throw into clearer light the record of his achievement.

CHAPTER VIII

The Busy Nineties

In a fascinating volume entitled *The Eighteen Nineties*, Holbrook Jackson studies the "new movements" that appeared with the end of the century. These movements are usually not so much directed toward a particular thing as they are infusions of a new spirit. Their demand is not so much for a particular specific as for something new. "Not to be *new* is, in these days, nothing", wrote Traill. It was a volatile, changeable, anxious period. And as the age lacked a driving motive, it left for the following time the supplying of solutions and itself showed only the desire for change.

This spirit of the nineties had developed some years before in the vision of a new social organization which was to be forced down upon men's crowded ways, correcting not only the circumstances of men's lives, but purifying the lives themselves. And measures were taken for the establishment of institutions which should accomplish these ends. Butler, in his *The Way of All Flesh*, tells of the monasteries which were to be the citadels of the new social principle. And then, as the broad social dreams proved illusory,

some men withdrew into the recesses of individualism and contrived an anodyne in the workings of the individual soul. The Ruskins and the Morrises, the Hyndmans, the Toynbees were followed by the Wildes, the Beardsleys, and the Beerbohms. In the nineties the voices of the social reformers mingle with the voices of the individualists in a quaint disconcert of destiny and disillusion.

In this general movement the drama now began to take its place. It had been drawn into the social arena through the emphasis of its social connections by Matthew Arnold, H. A. Jones, William Archer, and others. The end of the century produced a new social program for the theatre. Now began public discussions of the obligation of the State to make the drama a fitting servant of the people, the obligation of the people to use the theatre for their own upbuilding. Censorship, national theatres, social dramatic therapeutics were much written about. Criticism arose to new power. Newspapers opened their columns to the discussion of dramas. Plays were thinly disguised tracts. The drama was being evangelized. More than one writer promised that the theatre should usurp the place of the church.

And along with these broad social appeals, by which works of the theatre were advertised in the market like so much merchandise, there came signs of another disposition among the dramatists themselves, a disposition that was to render futile the nice visions of a great national theatre ruled over by an art-enfranchised people. This disposition arose from the neces-

sities of the dramatist's craft, which, continually refining itself, making itself more exact, came to demand a smaller stage for action, a more genuine coöperation of the arts in the theatre, a keener and more discriminating audience. This demand came from the art of the theatre rather than from the blue prints and specifications of the social idealists. It was based upon a no less sincere belief in the new age that was at hand, but it saw the signs of this age in more hidden places. And, because much nonsense had been spoken by heated advocates of the "millennium around the corner", it saw the new events with some quaint humor, and it protected their revelation under an affectation of the grotesque and the inscrutable. Bernard Shaw, Chesterton, Barker, Synge are born of the generation of the nineties coming to flower in the free air of the new century. Only William Sharp, Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde, expire before the new century.

"A great creative period is at hand; probably a great dramatic epoch. But what will for one thing differentiate it from any predecessor is the new complexity, the new subtlety, in apprehension, in formative conception, in imaginative rendering." In these words by William Sharp we have the first hint of the new structure, and the new ideals of staging which in the hands of Yeats and Craig and Barker and their fellows across the channel in Germany, Belgium, and Russia, were to claim the stage after the dominion of social causes. Meanwhile the old conception of the theatre as a thing of tricks and artifices began to give

way to the idea that the theatre might be respected as a fountain of ideas. Zola began to be known for his ideas as well as for his scandals. Tolstoi was read and acted. Echegaray's *El Gran Galeoto* had been done in adaptation under the title of *Calumny* as early as 1889. This influence from across the Channel was something quite other than that of the "Sardoudledom" of a few years before. It was causing men to think. It was taking the theatre into their homes, a place in which it was to show some disposition to rest, to the discomfiture of managers. It was hanging upon the stage a burden of causes. But at the same time it was introducing the stage into highly intelligent circles.

But the voices of the new artists and thinkers were not the first to be heard in the busy nineties. The older lusty generation of declaimers and entertainers and shockers did not pass away in silence. They were driven into the noisy limbo "below the culture line" to the theatres on the outskirts of respectability, the Drury Lanes of lost tradition. The too much argument of critics, the incubus of an ill-digested Ibsen, the drove of plays, like fishes in schools, coming along to give an impromptu philosophy of life, to attack the world-old problems of humanity with the little weapons of new-found social doctrine, the mock thinking, the lyric prose tragedy of discontent, of revolution based on ennui, of moral law derived from the instant whim of the weak — all these made much din in these days of change. Many attempts were made to force the old theatre to the demands of the new age before the next decade was to find that what was required was a

new organization quite free from the trammels of the past.

First, the older managers passed away. Irving remained aloof on his pedestal until his death in 1905. The Bancrofts, the creators of a new order in the theatre, had retired as far back as 1885. The Kendals gave an increasing amount of time to the provinces, until they too retired. Augustus Harris and Wilson Barrett died. The vogue of the Savoy opera hardly outlived the eighties. Then came the newer generation of actor managers: Tree at His Majesty's; Harrison and Maude at the Haymarket; Wyndham at the Criterion and Wyndham's Theatre; Robertson at the Comedy.

Among authors Henry Herman, W. G. Wills, G. R. Sims, Robert Buchanan, — the hope of the drama in the eighties, — died or were relegated to minor places. Pinero and Jones stand out as the chief figures of the decade. Around them grew up other dramatists to ape their ways. Sydney Grundy claims to be something of a contributor to ideas, and in his *Sowing the Wind* (1893) provides a nine days' sensation in a year of sensations. Outside the group of the dramatists of ideas Oscar Wilde, at the beginning of the decade, and Stephen Phillips at the end rise to popularity and sink, the one to obloquy, the other to forgetfulness.

All this interest and discussion encouraged managers to try their hands at new things. In 1890 Mr. Tree began to set aside one night a week for the production of plays "calculated to delight and charm the few" but ill suited to the grosser tastes of vast audiences.

This was the first sign of a disposition to adapt the professional stage to the new movements in playwriting, and pointed the way to a more flexible organization of the stage. The first "Monday night" was given to the production of Stevenson and Henley's *Beau Austin*. After this Mr. Tree produced Maeterlinck's *The Intruder*. Neither of these plays secured critical approval. In 1891 John T. Grein established his Independent Theatre, bringing to England plays of Ibsen, Tolstoi, and Maeterlinck and, among native playwrights, giving early encouragement to George Moore and G. B. Shaw.

In 1891 the American Copyright Bill was passed. By this Bill equal protection was afforded to the printed play in America and in England. This measure was immediately followed by a great increase in printed plays. Following the lead of Gilbert, Pinero and Jones began to print their plays. Their example was followed by Grundy and Wilde and Phillips. The custom of printing plays made possible the growth of the greatest reputation of the period, that of George Bernard Shaw. The two foundation stones upon which rest the drama of the early twentieth century are the experimental theatre and the printed play.

Ibsen, who before had been only a name, now comes fully into the life of England. His message is spread on the stage and through criticisms and translations. Charles Charrington and Janet Achurch played *A Doll's House*, June 7, 1889, following this the next year with *Pillars of Society*. The company was then

taken around the world, and the gospel of Ibsen was spread in Australia, New Zealand, India, and Egypt. Ibsen's real vogue began in 1891, at which time *A Doll's House* was repeated by this company. On February 20, 1891, Mr. Herbert Waring and Miss Elizabeth Robins presented *The Master Builder* at the Trafalgar Square Theatre. Three days later Miss Florence Farr played *Rosmersholm.* The now famous Independent Theatre production of *Ghosts* occurred March 13, 1891. And on April 20, two young American women, Miss Elizabeth Robins and Miss Marion Lea, gave *Hedda Gabler.* By 1893 there had been added to this list by various producers *The Lady from the Sea,* the fourth act of *Brand,* and *An Enemy of the People.*

Interest in Ibsen was spread largely by means of the printed play. Archer reported that within a year after the publication of the play Hedda Gabler was known as well as Becky Sharp. The uniform edition of the prose dramas was published in 1891 under the editorship of William Archer. Two years later (1893) Archer reports that of the four plays in the Camelot Series, *Pillars of Society, A Doll's House, Ghosts,* and *An Enemy of the People,* 14,367 copies had been sold in 1892. Of the uniform edition 16,834 copies had sold in two years. In all he estimates that forty thousand volumes had been sold, and that seven plays had been successfully produced. The Ibsen vogue was significant in England in two directions. It started the current of thought toward the theatre; it established the custom of printing and reading plays.

The position of Ibsen in England of this period should not be misunderstood. Strictly speaking, Ibsen never was popular in England. The number of plays written on his model has been very small, and these have been for the most part either immediate or eventual failures. They were either killed immediately by their ugliness of outline, or they were killed finally by the fact that their mental construction would not stand the test of study. But Ibsen's indirect influence was more thorough. Those who imitated him did it badly. Those who came under the stimulus of his spirit could not fail to be made more honest in thought, less artificial in workmanship than before. After 1890, English plays can be pretty clearly divided into those which have felt the impress of the Ibsen spirit and those which have not. And the presumption is usually against the latter class. It was not that plays had to be Ibsenic in form and philosophy, but that they had to be purified in the air that he had shot clear. The influence of Ibsen on his blind imitators has been unfortunate. From some dramatists he seemed to take away the joy in work as well as the joy in life. Their plays became labored, tepid, stilted, and reeked of a half-baked misanthropy. This motive represented the worst aspect of his influence. The best aspect was represented by his heroic testing of formulas and renovation of values.

Naturally a new spirit could not be introduced into English drama without objection. There had been rumblings of critical disapproval for ten years, ever since Jones had thrown *Saints and Sinners* as a

bombshell into the camp of English respectability. It had been increased by the controversies over Grundy at the end of the eighties, and in 1893 and 1894 it burst like a fury over the new plays of Jones and Pinero and the productions of the Ibsenites. The champion of the older order of critics was Clement Scott, the dean of English critics, long the editor of *The Theatre* and in the early nineties dramatic critic of *Truth*. He had as aids such men as Robert Buchanan, of "fleshly school of poetry" fame, and many ecclesiastics. The leader of the other side was William Archer. The difference between the methods of the two men was marked. Scott was vituperative. Archer was calm always. Scott indulged in personalities; Archer held to the critical point. It looked then as if Scott were defending the standard, the conservative taste, the abiding values, and as if Archer were defending the violation of standard, the collapse of taste. Archer defended Jones for appealing to the public in advertisements. Scott held that this was beneath the dignity of an artist. Archer found something to hope for even in melodrama. To Scott this form was the violation of all art. Archer believed Grundy was one of the first of England's playwrights and supported the new morality of fearless public discussion. Scott would give Grundy no such place. Nor could he see how a man who "dared to be moral" could soil his fingers with Zola and Sardou, with Halévy and Dumas fils. In the year that Becque was suing Sarcey for flaying his play, *La Parisienne*, the climax of English critical virulence came. After the

performance of *Ghosts* at the Independent Theatre, Scott compared the play in *The Daily Telegraph* with an open drain, a loathsome sore unbandaged, and censured "the gross and almost putrid indecorum of the play." He followed this with an anonymous attack in *Truth* excelling in spite anything lately seen in English criticism. Then, sick at heart at the vulgarity of the stage to which he had given his life, he took a trip around the world and returned home to die. In a *Schimpflexikon* printed in the *Pall Mall Gazette* under the title of *Ghosts and Gibberings*, and in an article in the *Fortnightly Review* for 1893, *The Mausoleum of Ibsen*, Archer prints a list of the epithets that had been applied to Ibsen's plays by British journalists. Among these are "abominable, disgusting, bestial, fetid, loathsome, putrid, crapulous, offensive, scandalous, repulsive, revolting, blasphemous, abhorrent, degrading, unwholesome, sordid, foul, filthy, malodorous, noisome." Ibsen is called an egotist, a bungler, a suburban, a provincial. The controversy raged again in November, 1894, in *The Times*, around the head of Jones. It culminated in a general condemnation of stage plays by the Bishops, Cardinal, and Pillars of London.

Amid such events the censorship stood out more prominently than ever before. Then in fact the censorship began to take a prominent place in stage controversy. When immorality was only that of innuendo, and was addressed to the sensibilities rather than to the intelligence, the censor was seldom able to devise means for reaching it. But when immorality

came into the theme, he had something he could deal with. He had held up *Camille* for a long time, until the success of the company of the Comédie Française in 1879 had given Dumas respectability. He had held up *Frou Frou.* Meanwhile he had licensed one of the naughtiest of French farces, *Pink Dominoes.* Up to the early nineties, plays had been censored for occasional oaths or for offenses against classes of people or friendly powers. Now the chief ground of censorship came to be a play's treatment of matters of sex. As a rule, the more dignified the treatment, the more likely the play was to be censored.

This situation developed to its height during the nineties. The topics of the realistic plays were no more disagreeable than had been those of the older plays. They were merely treated unsentimentally. It wasn't the subject-matter of the new drama that was objected to, but its denial of romantic illusions. Archer writes of the censorship: "From this came the *double entendre,* the between-the-lines meaning. When Mr. Burnand introduces us to a variety actress or a female acrobat, we all know what was the lady's profession in the original French; and that elastic and convenient term 'flirtation' covers a multitude of sins, but covers them in a very gauzy fashion." And Percy Fitzgerald speaks of the fashionable "disinfecting process" by means of which there is evolved the type of "innocent-guilty" plays.

The importance of these things lies in the fact that through an external control either by the government or the people the author is not permitted to be true

to his own theme. He is compelled to stultify his art at the source. Now the true dramatist demands for his art only what Maupassant calls "the right to present truth as he sees it, according to his individual impression of reality." Hardy asks that a novel be considered an impression, not an argument, and he quotes Goethe: "As soon as I observe that any one, when judging of poetical representations, considers anything more important than the inner necessity and truth, I have done with him." These demands hold good for the dramatist. He asks only the right to presents his individual impression of life.

The fact that the great public acting arbitrarily through its organs of expression or officially through its government will not permit this freedom has resulted in one of the most important movements of recent years. This movement had its inception in the nineties, found its expression in organization in the first decade of the next century, and began immediately to flower into new playwrights and plays. It represented the separation of the smaller from the larger audience, the isolation of the few who demand a high standard from the many who are satisfied with a standard of the good enough. It provided edifices in which these few may be protected in their private rights and in which the artist may be protected in his æsthetic imperatives. There was nothing snobbish in this movement. It rested upon the selective basis of taste and understanding. It began in England as an attempt to avoid the necessities of ticket selling, which is the handle the Lord Chamberlain holds to

the commercial theatre. As it proceeded, it tended to form groups about common interests. In this way it accompanied the narrowing of themes to an intimate and incisive standard. The development of the new theatrical organization upon the unit of the smaller as distinguished from the great audience will be treated in the next chapter.

Much of the spirit of the nineties was one of enthusiasm and promise. But there was the reverse of this shield. For several years, from 1891 to 1895, the "dramatic renascence" was hailed. And, as in the case of socialism, men began to think of it in terms of the next step. But these enthusiasts failed to take account of the slow moving of forces. The tempest about Ibsen died down. Then failures began. Jones's *Michael and his Lost Angel* lived ten days. H. V. Esmond's *The Divided Way* and Grundy's *The Greatest of These* were badly received. These failures were partly the result of the turning of the tide against plays which had been supported in a spasm of enthusiasm. They came partly because the dramatists were overplaying the lead. And in large measure they came because the new movements had taught the audience and critics an intolerance of judgment. As an ironic result of a movement for reform, the critics, having sharpened their weapons, used them with ferocity on good and bad alike.

In spite of the interest in the stage, the legitimate theatre business became a very precarious thing indeed. Managers found it more and more dangerous to experiment. This was not altogether because of

the opposition of cheap standards but because high-class audiences and critics could not be depended upon. With the growth of interest there had come the breaking-up into camps, the bickerings and back-firings of new and old movements, new and old critics, the foreign and the native play. As dramatists tried their wings, managers retired. Then with a sweep the new craze for entertainment began. All the force that had been used to recreate the place of the drama in society was now turned to making the fortunes of such plays as *Under the Red Robe*, *The Sign of the Cross*, *Trilby*, *The Prisoner of Zenda*. Gloom fell in the camps of reform. Men thought that the end of the world had come. They did not recognize that it was but the breaking-up of the old groupings preparatory to a new organization.

The "Eighteen-nineties" were anxiously listening for new voices. They were willing to give a hearing to anything that seemed to promise a fresh note. For this reason the table was spread with some wares that before might not have been offered. A few years before the nineties the ill-starred pen of John Davidson had brought forth a series of dramas not appropriate for the stage but of a rare and absolute genius, — *Bruce, A Drama* (1886), *Smith, A Tragic Farce* (1888), *Scaramouch in Naxos* (1889). To the latter had been set a prologue on pantomime that promises some of the later positions of Maeterlinck and Gordon Craig. And William Sharp in *Vistas* (1894) wrote a series of short plays of quite remarkable originality.

It was characteristic of Oscar Wilde (1856–1900)

that after spending his life on other kinds of writing, he turned in his last five years of work to success on the stage. His plays were thought to represent a high mark in English drama. We now know that they deserve no such position. They are the work of a skilled craftsman in writing. They came at a juncture in English affairs when their qualities would be accepted. Beside the more sincere work of other men they deserve the more critical regard they have lately received.

Wilde possessed the gift that was most in demand for the theatre of the nineties. He had style. He could take easy attitudes on other men's thoughts. This ability for taking attitudes gave him credit for knowing the world. It was particularly useful as a theatrical gift. But Wilde's theatrical gift is a superficial one. Of the theatre as an art of life he knew nothing. He was interested in the theatre only as an art apart from life. Neither in structure, substance, character, grouping, or epigram did Wilde add a jot to our knowledge of men by his plays. And his plots were of a variety that no other man in England would have dared to construct.

What then made Wilde's popularity? It was his "tact" for discovering the passing mood of the time and expressing it gracefully. No writer who has written in English has floated upon his age as has Wilde. He carried the art of superficiality up to genius. He was nothing apart from his time, and when his time repudiated him he had no life left. His repute for the daring and original came from his ability to surprise men at themselves. His plays are

the work of a quick and brilliant talker who anticipates the ideas of his fellows and gives them back adorned with crisp words. His faculty of epigram he applied to a series of plots of the most astounding triteness. It hardly seems possible that a man of Wilde's wit could have accepted the plots that he uses in his first three plays. They are melodramatic in idea, they teem with hackneyed situations; they are banal in their appeal to a purely theatrical sympathy. The characters are almost totally undifferentiated.

The models of his structures are found in the French plays of intrigue, the plays of hidden paternities, of midnight visits in gentlemen's chambers, of generous shielding of the guilty one by sister or friend. After the fashion of the French play, the action of three of them, of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, and *An Ideal Husband*, takes place within twenty-four hours. Wilde managed to do what Grundy had been unable to do, to transfer the French technique to the stage of an English theatre. The justification of his wit is the same as that of the French turned phrase. The characters live in a thoroughly artificial society. They talk the language of that society, a language of badinage and quips and apothegms. It matters not that in so doing they all speak alike. Within the limits of an artificial society Wilde has managed to differentiate a few men. He has created no woman worthy of passing respect as a creation. His heroines do not even live within their class; and his dowagers, Mrs. Cheveley, Lady Blacknell, the Duchess of Berwick, are used for his didactic talk.

After *The Duchess of Padua*, a historical melodrama of the sixteenth century, and *Vera, or the Nihilists*, a Russian melodrama, neither of which was produced in England, Wilde wrote *Lady Windermere's Fan*. It was produced by George Alexander at the St. James's Theatre, February 22, 1892. The situation of this is a palliation of the French triangle play. As at first presented the author tried to conceal from the audience the identity of Mrs. Erlynne until the final act. This he changed after a few nights. His next play was *A Woman of No Importance*, presented at the Haymarket Theatre by Beerbohm Tree, April 19, 1893. Again we have a purely artificial situation play, with the past rising up, the son of shame, the parents' struggle. Again there is surprise at the disclosure of a fact of which the audience had been aware. *An Ideal Husband*, presented by Lewis Waller at the Haymarket, January 3, 1895, is a story of political and business intrigue, with sale of cabinet secrets and swords of retribution poised. There is the dangerous woman and the dull good woman and much moralizing palaver. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, presented at the St. James's by George Alexander, February 14, 1895, Wilde threw away his melodramatic themes. The structure is for the first time flexible, and the epigrams are justified. Wilde calls this "a trivial comedy for serious people." It is successful because it is thoroughly detached from all meaning and models. Wilde had discovered in the graceful foolery of farce the form best adapted to the expression of his genius on the stage. Here for the first time the language and the form suited

the theme and the substance. It is a pure farce of quick wits and refined intelligences, showing how high this form might go if its motives were made more to inhere in the subtleties of the mind. Perhaps because it was so playful and adept it was Wilde's best commentary on frivolous society. This play suggests what the English theatre may have lost by the premature closing of the career of the playwright. The list of Wilde's plays is completed with *Salome*, written by Wilde first in French and accepted for production by Sarah Bernhardt. This is one of the first plays in Europe of the Oriental sensuous school. For its source, outside of Maeterlinck, one has to look to the works of the French decadents and of the Aubrey Beardsley group of English artists.

The influence of Wilde was considerable. Not many could copy his brilliance and wit, but all could copy his copy. There grew up in the nineties a little school of comedy of manners, dextrously plotted, well-tilled little gardens. The trick of "surface manners" and good taste had been learned. Therefore there was nothing else to do but write delicately about denied topics. It must be said that none of the comedians of manners had quite the artificiality of Wilde. They made up what they lacked in brilliance by a sincerity of interest in social manners, sometimes by a manly note of scorn. But as a whole, these plays are like the crackling of reeds in a pot. Haddon Chambers (1860) brought from New South Wales a little note of the Empire into English drama. In *Captain Swift* (1888) he introduces a gentleman thief adventurer

from the "bush" of an order that was much to be used later. His best play is *The Tyranny of Tears* (1899), persistently referred to as showing a Wilde influence. It is an adroit, expeditious study of feminine foibles, developed with only five characters and with no flagging of interest or break in the solid structure. Other plays are *John a' Dreams* (1894), *Passers-by* (1911), *Tante* (1913). H. V. Esmond (1869–) deserves to be remembered for the realism of his *Grierson's Way*, a tragedy in a Chelsea flat. Other plays of his of a lighter, more sentimental kind are *When We Were Twenty-one* (1901) and *The Sentimentalists* (1902). To the sentimental class belong the comedies of R. C. Carton (1856–) *The Home Secretary* (1895), *The Tree of Knowledge* (1897), *Lord and Lady Algy* (1898). Mrs. Craigie (John Oliver Hobbes, 1867–1906) attempted to transfer to the theatre her interest in temperaments in *Journeys End in Lovers' Meeting* (1894), written with George Moore, *The Ambassador* (1898), *A Repentance* (1899), *The Wisdom of the Wise* (1900), *The Bishop's Move* (1902). Cynical, knowing life so well that her knowledge crystallized into epigrams, she failed of command of the stage formula. F. Anstey in *The Man from Blankleys* shows a minute observation of the middle class; Isaac Henderson in *The Mummy and the Humming-bird* writes an effective situation play. But comedy of manners failed to find the key to the age, and suddenly the writers of it are left high and dry.

Stimulated perhaps by the demand for a literary drama, and encouraged by the success of Richepin and

Rostand in France, George Alexander in 1900 commissioned Stephen Phillips to write him a tragedy in verse. Phillips (1868–1915) had made himself the most discussed poet in England by the publication in 1898 of *Poems*, including *Christ in Hades* and *The Woman with the Dead Soul*. He had also had several years' experience as an actor with the company of his cousin, F. R. Benson, in whose company he had played Iago, Prospero, and Ghost. One result of Alexander's commission was the publication in 1900 of *Paolo and Francesca*. In book form the play won an immense success. Before *Paolo and Francesca* was produced Beerbohm Tree had produced the poet's *Herod* (1900). Thereafter Tree produced *Ulysses* (1902), *Nero* (1906), and *Faust* (1908), written with J. Comyns Carr. *Paolo and Francesca* was produced by George Alexander (1901). *Aylmer's Secret*, *The Sin of David*, *Pietro of Siena*, and one or two other plays await production. Phillips was extravagantly hailed upon the publication of his first plays as "widening the realm of poetic imagination." Some said that a great poetic era had come in the theatre. Others accuse him of staying behind "singing to the dying."

Whatever may be said of Phillips, he must be granted two qualities: a true lyrical imagination and a command of the mechanics of the stage. But these did not make him a great dramatist. The two gifts seemed in fact to check each other. His most successful play was *Paolo and Francesca*, for in this his art was most flexible. In his other plays he undertook themes that cramped his lyrical gift. He was said to desire to go

back beyond the Elizabethan type of play to the stricter models of the classics. This choice of a medium was the poet's first error. It came perhaps from a too aspiring mind, a desire to join with the great poets of all time in the themes he treated. No English dramatist has succeeded in writing a practicable play by Greek models, and Phillips was not equipped to succeed where others had failed.

Not even *Paolo and Francesca*, which had some of the traits of the Elizabethan play, was as successful on the stage as it had been in the book. In compensating for his strained design, Phillips depends largely upon elements of pageantry and verse. His plays came to be seen as workmanlike, but small, panoramas, rich with color, instinct with music and poetry, but cold to the touch. They did not have the passion of the Greek play or the scope of the romantic play. They were little pageants, groups of beautifully moving surfaces of action. They were expressed in exquisite poetry, but the poetry was swamped by the action and the pageantry. Phillips made no attempt to deal with the mind of his own time. Only once did he come to modern England, and this, in *The Sin of David*, was to avoid the ban of the censor against the treatment of a Biblical theme. It is not probable that Phillips' plays will again be seen on the stage. But they will be read for some time for the beauty of their verse and the warmth of their feeling.

CHAPTER IX

New Organization

This chapter deals with the new systems of organization that in the first decade of the new century were introduced into England. The demand for a new organization arose out of a growth of a new audience and a new taste. It was encouraged by the influence of the dramatic movements on the Continent. It was made necessary by the increasing governmental and commercial handicaps under which the old organizations of the theatre worked.

For some time it had been apparent to the best managers of professional companies that something would have to be done to bend the existing institution of the theatre towards the newer movements. Of these managers the man with the most discernment and courage was Beerbohm Tree. We have seen that as early as 1890 Tree had set aside Monday nights for the production of experimental pieces. Later he had given morning and afternoon performances for the same purpose. At his Afternoon Theatre he presented such plays as *An Enemy of the People*, *Hannele*, and *Hansel and Gretel*, with good music. Tree had been active in

the organization of the Costume Society. In 1904 he founded the *Academy of Dramatic Art* for the instruction of actors and stage directors, costumers, and writers. In 1914 this academy had a large Council, with eighty-four distinguished members of the profession acting as associates. Since 1905 he has made it a custom to give each year an elaborate Shakespeare festival finely mounted.

The matinée idea was practiced as a means of experiment on new plays. It was used also to avoid the annoyances of evening performances. In the nineties Archer and Oswald Crawfurd had suggested four o'clock matinées on the plea that the "man who has dined is the one great enemy of the intellectual drama"; and "Max" had written in the *Saturday Review*: "Before we can hope to raise drama to the level of other arts we must undermine by every means in our power the custom of regarding the theatre as a jolly place in which to digest food and sit in amity with our fellow creatures." With the thought of applying this theory to professional productions, Pinero suggested earlier evening performances and later dinners. Matinée performances formed the first production of some of the most notable plays of the recent theatre, among them plays by Bernard Shaw and Galsworthy's *Strife*.

The most significant efforts were those that were made by people within and without the theatre to create an auxiliary organization for a specialized appeal. For such an organization models had already been supplied by Paris and Berlin, in the establishment of the Théâtre Libre in Paris in 1887 and the Freie Bühne in Berlin in

1889. These theatres were known as free theatres. They were intended to be free from the control of the government and of the ancient traditions in playwriting and acting. Theatrical conditions are not the same in England as they are on the Continent. For this reason freedom means a different thing. In England the new workers desired to be free from the control of the censorship and of a hampering moral code. More than this, they wished to be free from the limitations of the commercial system. On their side they had no need to complain of the tyranny of traditions. They were more likely to ask to be permitted to make strict regulations of art. For these reasons the English free theatres were not bound to the naturalistic code as were those of the Continent.

The call for an English free theatre had first been made by George Moore in his *Impressions and Opinions* (1891). The man who put this call into effect was John T. Grein, who in 1891 organized the Independent Theatre. Like Antoine of the Théâtre Libre, Grein was a man of commerce with a vision. Of Dutch nativity, Consul General of the Congo, a critic, and a traveler, Grein made up his mind to introduce European drama to England. In 1889 he began to edit a magazine for noticing French and Dutch pieces. His establishment of the Independent Theatre was not without portent. It found its first home in the little theatre in Tottenham Court Road with which Marie Wilton twenty-five years before had begun a new régime. And this theatre opened its doors with the same play with which French and German free theatres

had begun their careers. The production of *Ghosts* (March 1, 1891), under the direction of Mr. Cecil Raleigh, was a slap in the face of English theatrical complacency. There ensued the campaign of abuse which was mentioned in the last chapter, a campaign in which the intentions and the morals of those interested in the performance were severely impugned. Though the monetary returns were small, the venture accomplished the designs of the founder. He secured a membership including such men and women as George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, A. W. Pinero, H. A. Jones, and Mrs. J. R. Green. Archer wrote for the movement in the *Fortnightly Review*, Moore in the *Pall Mall Gazette;* A. B. Walkley and G. B. Shaw soon joined the standard. But Grein tells us that the roll of the members never exceeded one hundred and seventy-five. He was often without money, supporting the productions out of his own means, meanwhile struggling against the censor, and sometimes even without a theatre. His management was farsighted and diplomatic. With none of the militant spirit of Antoine, he was able to make many friends for the new theatre.

The second production of the Independent Theatre was Zola's *Thérèse Raquin.* Then followed three short plays, one by Arthur Symons, founded on a story by Frank Harris, Theodore de Banville's *The Kiss,* and George Brandes's *A Visit.* In 1892, in consequence of a dare made by G. R. Sims, there came George Moore's *The Strike at Arlingford.* The greatest contribution of the theatre was in opening the stage to Shaw in 1892 for the production of *Widowers' Houses.* In 1894 The

Independent Theatre, Limited, was incorporated for the production of Dorothy Leighton's *Thyrza Fleming.* The following year (1895) brought the Paris company of Lugnè-Poe for a week, playing *The Master Builder, Rosmersholm, Pelléas et Mélisande, L'Intérieur* and *L'Intruse* in French. Between productions, Grein went back to work as Antoine was doing. The Independent Theatre lasted seven years and produced twenty-six plays new and translated.

Out of the ashes of the Independent Theatre came the Stage Society, incorporated in 1904. The first meeting for the organization of this Society was called by Mr. Frederick Whelen, then employed by the Bank of England and later literary secretary to Sir H. Beerbohm Tree. The meeting was held in William Morris's old rooms in Red Lion Square. The Society was established on the basis of subscriptions and has been kept on this basis. The advantage of this system is that a definite income is provided whereby the element of speculation is eliminated, and the performances are technically private. As no money is accepted at the door, the censorship is avoided. The Society has paid its way from the first and has set aside a reserve fund. Two performances are given each play, one on Sunday night and one on Monday afternoon. The Society has attached itself to no theatre but has engaged theatres for particular performances, often playing at the Imperial. It has presented plays regularly since 1899, the number of annual productions running between four and eight. The membership of the Society in 1914 was about twelve hundred. It is managed by a large council

which has numbered among its members at different times J. M. Barrie, Bernard Shaw, Gilbert Murray, Frederick Whelen, and A. E. Drinkwater.

The record of the Stage Society is an impressive one. Its purpose lies in the field of pioneering rather than in popularization, but as a feature of its work it is continually offering men and wares to the popular theatres. It has kept well ahead of the popular demand but it has never surrendered to an eccentric appeal. Its contributions to the English theatre have fallen into three classes, the contributions of new actors and producers, the introduction of significant foreign plays in translation, and the support of new English writers. Among workers its most important product has been Granville Barker, who graduated from the Stage Society into the management of repertory theatres. Many of the productions of the Stage Society represent the first English performance. The Stage Society started with Shaw's *You Never Can Tell* (1900). The same year was given *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (1900). The list includes Ibsen's *Pillars of Society, The Lady from the Sea, When We Dead Awaken, The League of Youth* (1900); Eugène Brieux's *Les Hannetons* (1907); St. John Hankin's *The Two Mr. Wetherbys* (1903); *The Cassilis Engagement* (1907); Gorky's *The Lower Depths* (1903); Tolstoi's *The Power of Darkness* (1903); Maugham's *A Man of Honour* (1904); Gilbert Murray's *Andromache* (1901); Granville Barker's *Waste* (1907); Joseph Conrad's *One Day More* (1905); Frank Wedekind's *Der Kammersänger* (1907); Tchekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* (1913); George Moore's

Esther Waters (1911); and plays by Hauptmann, Sudermann, Heijermanns, Gogol, de Curel, Björnson, Bennett, Fiona McLeod, Schnitzler, F. O. Francis, Houghton, and Strindberg.

The example set by the Incorporated Stage Society has been followed by many other societies with similar purposes. The Play Actors were formed in 1907 for the production of Sunday performances of Shakespeare, new English plays, and translations. This society has to its credit the discovery of Miss Baker's fine play, *Chains*. The Stockport Garrick Society, English Play Society, The Oncomers Society (founded 1910), The Drama Society (founded 1911) represent much the same purposes. The Morality Play Society (1911) and The German Theatre Company (1908) serve functions suggested by their titles.

More vital than any of these has been the work and influence of the Elizabethan Stage Society. The Society was established in 1895 by Mr. William Poel, after he had conducted for ten years the Shakespeare Reading Society. The work of the Society has been of both an archæological and artistic nature. It has been the purpose of the director to revitalize past principles of production. To this end he has been tireless in research and in production. From 1893 to 1913 the Elizabethan Stage Society produced fourteen Shakespeare plays, plays by Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Middleton, Ford, Jonson, Milton, Molière, Goldsmith, Schiller, Euripides, as well as the *Sakuntala, Everyman, Jacob and Esau,* and *Arden of Feversham.* Among the most interesting productions was that of the First Quarto

Hamlet (1900) presented in Carpenter's Hall at Oxford. And one of most far-reaching influence was *Everyman* (July 20, 1901), presented by amateurs in the quadrangle at Charterhouse in the open air. In this first performance the Creator appeared as a white-bearded man with a halo, and the part of Everyman was taken by a woman. By arrangement with the Elizabethan Stage Society, Ben Greet took *Everyman* to St. George's Hall, London, in 1902. This production, somewhat modified, was later seen in America.

These things were largely the work of outsiders, working as a rule in narrow surroundings. There had for many years been on foot in larger circles a project for a national theatre. The movement really had two sources. The first was in a plan, often broached, to do honor to Shakespeare. The second was in a broad plan to place the theatre of England on a national basis. As early as 1820 Charles Mathews had suggested the founding of a national theatre at Stratford. In 1879 the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford was opened. In the *Fortnightly Review* for 1889 William Archer made a plea for an endowed theatre which should glorify the nation and liberate dramatic art. Codified plans for this institution are found in Archer and Barker's *Scheme and Estimates for a National Theatre* (1907). In 1908 two schemes for a Shakespeare Memorial and a National Theatre were amalgamated. A citizen of London, Mr. Richard Badger, offered to the County Council of London three thousand five hundred pounds to start a movement for a Shakespeare Memorial. By 1913 the committee had acquired at a cost of sixty thousand

pounds a site for a national theatre. The House of Commons was asked for the support of the State in the undertaking, and the motion was "talked out." There the matter rests.

The demand for change in organization came not only from outsiders. It came as well from men of the theatre itself. The faults of the theatre became so pronounced that a cry for repertory theatres began to arise. What were the conditions in the professional theatre that called for correction? As pointed out by the reformers they were the following: First, long runs; second, the star system; third, unsteadiness of employment for the artist; fourth, no continuity of the company unit; fifth, insufficient tuition for the actor; sixth, the prohibitive cost of experiments; seventh, the debilitating control of the metropolis over the theatre of the provinces. All these faults it was the purpose of the new repertory theatre to correct.

England had in fact had a repertory company for several years. Since the mid-eighties F. R. Benson had been touring England at the head of a provincial company, which in 1886 he had established in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford for annual runs in Shakespeare plays. With some breaks Benson had maintained his association with the Stratford Theatre. For fifteen years he toured the provinces of England, Ireland, and Scotland, venturing but seldom into London, playing Shakespeare and the classical drama. According to Sir Sidney Lee the slogans of Mr. Benson's campaign are "Shakespeare and the National Drama", "Short Runs", "No Stars", "All-round Com-

petence", and "Unostentatious Setting." Up to 1906 Benson's company had played thirty of Shakespeare's plays, those omitted being *Love's Labour's Lost, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, All's Well that Ends Well, Cymbeline, Measure for Measure, Titus Andronicus* and *Troilus and Cressida.* Among his most noteworthy achievements have been the playing of all three parts of *Henry VI* and the playing of *Hamlet* without cuts. The performance lasted six hours, one half being given in the afternoon and one half at night. For the first time, in this production (Lyceum, March, 1900) an English audience was enabled to see the King and Polonius as the dramatist had created them. In the season 1899–1900 Benson took the Lyceum Theatre and played eight plays in repertory, including seven of Shakespeare and *The Rivals.* In spite of many handicaps and the ridicule of some case-hardened critics, he introduced to London the first true repertory company. He had always supplied actors to the London stage. Now he was supplying ideas as well.

From the activities of the Elizabethan Stage Society and the Incorporated Stage Society, Granville Barker stepped nimbly on to the stage of professional experiment. In 1904 Mr. Barker, who had produced several plays for the Stage Society, was asked to produce *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* for the series of Shakespeare revivals which Mr. J. H. Leigh was giving in the Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, then under the management of Mr. Vedrenne. But Barker was not interested in Shakespeare alone. He had a new ax to grind, the sharp new instrument of the intellectual drama. As

Ibsen had been the rallying point of the stage experimenters of the nineties, Shaw served the same purpose for the new century. Vedrenne and Barker joined in the production of *Candida*, which was presented at six matinée performances and was a success. The two managers continued to give matinées in the autumn of 1904 and spring of 1905, and on May 1 of the latter year the Court Theatre came under the management of Vedrenne and Barker. Thus begins one of the most significant experiments of the new stage method.

The Court Theatre was successful from the start. Its most notable achievement was the discovery of a sane method of management in mitigation of the system of the commercial theatre. The Court Theatre was not a repertory theatre, but it went as far in this direction as possible to a commercial theatre at that or perhaps any time. Barker's best characteristic as an artist and manager has been his ability to keep his feet on the ground. He showed the qualities needed for an organizer of a new theatre, alertness and courage combined with common sense and an adherence to standards. He believes with Irving that art should pay for itself. For this reason he always withdrew plays when receipts began to fall. Plays were given as long as the interest was healthy and unstimulated. Meanwhile, matinées of other plays were given.

The Court Theatre was notable for natural and cultivated acting, and for its encouragement of the new drama. The most valuable service lay in raising Shaw to popularity. Of the nine hundred and eighty-eight performances given during the three years of this régime,

seven hundred and one were of Shaw plays. Eleven out of the thirty-two different plays were written by Shaw. In order of performances these plays are: *Candida, John Bull's Other Island, How He Lied to Her Husband, You Never Can Tell, Man and Superman, Major Barbara, Captain Brassbound's Conversion, The Doctor's Dilemma, The Philanderer, Don Juan in Hell* (from *Man and Superman*), *The Man of Destiny.* If the Court Theatre borrowed some strength from Shaw, it paid it out again in service to other dramatists. The list of plays it produced comprises the most important titles of the decade. John Galsworthy contributed to this theatre *The Silver Box;* Granville Barker, *The Voysey Inheritance;* Housman and Barker, *Prunella;* St. John Hankin, *The Return of the Prodigal* and *The Charity that Began at Home.* Three of Gilbert Murray's extraordinarily vivid transcriptions of Greek drama, *Electra, The Hippolytus, The Trojan Women,* were produced at this theatre, and there were plays by Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Maurice Hewlett, and John Masefield.

From the Court Theatre the associated managers went in the season 1907–1908 to the larger Savoy and there repeated several of the successes of the other house and added *Cæsar and Cleopatra, Arms and the Man,* Gilbert Murray's *Medea,* and Galsworthy's *Joy* to their list. During this season the same managers gave *The Devil's Disciple* at the Queen's Theatre and conducted a series of special matinées at the Haymarket Theatre, presenting Shaw's *Getting Married* and Masefield's *The Tragedy of Nan.* The production of *Strife* in a series of matinées at the Duke of York's Theatre

in March, 1909, later transferred for evening performances to the Haymarket Theatre, establishes the connection with Mr. Charles Frohman which was to culminate in the Duke of York's Repertory Theatre.

The Court Theatre had not been a true repertory theatre. But it so introduced the repertory idea as to lead Charles Frohman to undertake one of his most notable experiments. The Duke of York's Theatre was opened February 21, 1910, as a repertory theatre under the direction of Mr. Granville Barker. At first Mr. Barker had full command of the enterprise. As time went on he found his ideas bent by the counsel of other men. For this reason the season as a whole does not represent a consistent theory resolutely carried out. At the outset of the enterprise its spirit was expressed by Mr. Frohman: "A repertory theatre should be the first home of the ambitious young dramatist. I advise him to learn the conventions of the stage, but chiefly that he may be able to disregard them. I have no preference for any particular kind of play. I want what is good of any kind. One sometimes hears it said, 'A good thing, but not a play.' This is one of the kinds I want."

Whatever one may say of the list of plays presented by the Duke of York's Theatre, it would hardly be charged that the plays were conventional. The majority of them violate the older definitions of a play. But though they were all daring enough, they were not the work of new writers. All of the writers whose plays were produced were well-known men of letters. No play of an unknown man was undertaken. During

seventeen weeks there were one hundred and twenty-eight performances of ten plays. The season opened with Galsworthy's *Justice*. Two nights later Shaw's *Misalliance* was produced. In inaugurating the undertaking with these two plays, the one a bourgeois tragedy of unrelieved intensity, the other one of the most conversational of Shaw's discussion plays, the new management sufficiently elevated the house above the general. This *caviare* impression was borne out by such plays as Barrie's *Old Friends*, Meredith's *The Sentimentalists*, Barker's *The Madras House*, and Elizabeth Baker's *Chains*, all plays of a sustained intellectual appeal or of a rare and inscrutable artistry. Against the impression of these plays such lighter pieces as Barrie's *The Twelve Pound Look*, Pinero's *Trelawny of the "Wells"* (revival), Housman and Barker's *Prunella*, and Anthony Hope and Cosmo Gordon Lennox's *Helena's Path* were powerless to raise the spirits. The short season closed on a record of interesting experiment but of no success in solving the problems of the repertory theatre. Though he had lost heavily by the venture, Mr. Frohman promised to try again, but the theatre was not reopened.

Viewed in retrospect the repertory experiment showed several things. It was easier to create authors than it was to create an audience. The plays were all of a high level of artistry, so high in fact that there was not an audience large enough in London to support them. The "smaller audience" of which so much has been expected hardly sufficed to support a frequent change of bill. The business system for handling a repertory theatre is much more difficult than that required

for handling the ordinary commercial run. The problems of publicity and of the distribution of tickets are so complex as to point to the need of a subscription system. Moreover, the expense of handling the frequent changes of bill on the stage was great. For acting and actors the repertory system is favorable. But for authors it is not so profitable. The Duke of York's Repertory Theatre subjected the repertory theory to an extreme test and only partially supplied solutions for the problems.

The results reached at the Duke of York's Theatre were paralleled by the promised repertory venture of Mr. Herbert Trench. Mr. Trench expected to put into practice a diluted repertory idea at the Haymarket Theatre. In fact he gave beautiful productions to four excellent plays by the long run system. Chief of these was *The Blue Bird*, which had the unprecedented run (for a modern classic) of two years. Nor did Barker himself stick to the repertory plan. After leaving Mr. Frohman's theatre he started out at the Little Theatre in John Street, Adelphi, with *Fanny's First Play*, which had a run of over five hundred performances. And Vedrenne and Eadie, who with Barker had worked for the repertory idea, took the Royalty and performed Arnold Bennett's *Milestones* for hundreds of nights. The last promise of a repertory theatre in London was made by Frederick Whelen in 1911, but the plan was not realized.

If the repertory theatre idea had met a setback in the metropolis it had been more successful in the provinces. Some one has said that London has a repertory spread before it all the time. But this is not the case

in the smaller cities. During the last decade of the old century there had been a decrease rather than an increase in the number and quality of the theatrical offerings in the great English cities outside of London. And so the first full expression as well as the first success of the repertory theatre idea came in the English cities of the second class in population. One of the most notable movements of the new century has been to broaden the field of activity of the theatre from a center in London to cover the map of the British islands.

As Barker's name leads any discussion of the London repertory theatre, the name of Miss A. E. F. Horniman is found to dominate achievements in the provinces. Miss Horniman, a woman of independent resources, had shown her interest in the new stage as far back as 1894, when she had provided the money for Miss Florence Farr's performance of *Arms and the Man* at the Avenue Theatre. In 1903 she became interested in Mr. Yeats' plans for an Irish repertory theatre, and bought and remodeled the Mechanics Institute Hall, which she turned over to the company of the Irish National Theatre as the Abbey Theatre in 1904, rent free for six years. This benefaction went far toward establishing the work of the Irish players.

Miss Horniman opened her Manchester Repertory Theatre in 1907 at the Midland Theatre. The same year she bought the Gaiety Theatre, remodeled it, and opened it in the fall of 1908 with its own company, equipment, code of management, and, before long, its own authors. The aims of the new theatre had been outlined in 1907: "(*a*) A repertory theatre with a regular

change of program, not wedded to any one school of dramatists but thoroughly catholic, embracing the finest writing of the best authors of all ages and with an especially widely-open door to present-day British writers, who will not now need to sigh in vain for a hearing, provided only that they have something to say worth listening to, and say it in an interesting and original manner.

"(*b*) A permanent Manchester stock company of picked front-rank actors.

"(*c*) Efficient production.

"(*d*) Popular prices."

The repertory standard so outlined has been upheld from the start. Under the direction of Miss Horniman and the directors, Mr. B. Iden Payne and Mr. Lewis Casson, an efficient company has been provided. During the regular season it played to successful business in Manchester and special tours were organized to London, Dublin, Glasgow, and America. It has sent out its actors into other theatres in the provinces and in London. In repertory it has maintained a true catholicity. There have been produced plays by Euripides, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Sheridan, Goldsmith, Ben Jonson, and a full complement of modern authors. More than this, this theatre inaugurated a Midland school of playwrights. The first new production was Charles McEvoy's severely realistic study, *David Ballard*. Stanley Houghton's *Hindle Wakes* and *The Younger Generation* were both first performed by the Manchester players, as was Harold Brighouse's *The Odd Man Out*. In addition to these,

Basil Dean, Allen Monkhouse, and half a dozen other successful writers have received their first encouragement at this theatre. In late years there has been a little thinning down of the company and of the corps of authors on account of the allurements of London. This seems to suggest one of the great problems for the repertory theatre.

The Manchester Repertory Theatre was a mother of theatres. In 1904 the Scottish Playgoers, Limited, had been established in Glasgow after the fashion of the London Stage Society. In 1909 the Scottish Repertory Theatre was established to continue the work of the Playgoers. The theatre is in every sense a citizens' theatre, established by Scotsmen to make Scotland independent of the London Theatre. But the Scottish theatre is far more eclectic than is the Irish Theatre. It has presented original plays by J. J. Bell, Harold Brighouse, Harold Chapin, Neil Monro, and its list of borrowed pieces is representative. This theatre like others of its class depends upon the support of the "nucleus audience."

The Liverpool Repertory Theatre was established in 1911 on a limited liability plan with eight hundred shareholders. Though well managed, the company failed to secure support, and the end of the second season saw a deficit of two thousand pounds. In 1914 was introduced the plan of managing the theatre by the Commonwealth Plan. Actors, actresses, attendants, stage staff, orchestra, — all share the obligations and the profits. Minimum fixed charges are set for all purposes, and income above these is shared. This

is the first use of this plan of theatre management in England.

In 1913 the Birmingham Repertory Theatre was established, and in 1914 Lord Howard de Walden subsidized the Welsh National Drama Company. The best work that has come out of this latter company has been J. O. Francis's *Change*, which was awarded the Welsh Drama Competition prize in 1912. In 1911 a Repertory Theatre Association was established among the theatres of London and the provinces in the interests of the repertory plan.

The problem of the repertory theatre has not been solved. Barker gave it a test in London and discarded it for a time. It had a greater immediate success in the provinces because of the demand there for entertainment of a high class. That this demand was a little artificial, the result of much talk about the drama, there seems little doubt. The hardest things the repertory theatres have had to fight against are division in the councils of management and defections from the ranks at the call of the metropolis. Another thing that subjects the repertory scheme to strain is a striking success in one of its plays. According to present systems of support, there is no way in art or commercial commonsense to combat the run of a play that the people want to see. In London this has served to perpetuate the long run; in the provincial theatres it has operated to divide the companies. Tree's apothegm "When is a Repertory Theatre not a Repertory Theatre? When it is a success", contains much truth in a nutshell. Perhaps the chief value of the repertory theatre has been

as a ground of experiment and an incentive to composition.

Among the theatre movements of the new century the one that has had the largest measure of success is the Irish National Theatre. This theatre was established at a time to take at the flood the interest in things theatrical that had been developing in Europe. Its growth was aided by local conditions and by opportune outside help. It had a spiritually coherent audience to appeal to, it developed in a nation that had always been known for histrionic gifts, it appealed to a people who have a faculty for supporting "causes", and it provided a means of expression for an acute spirit of nationalism. Moreover, it made good friends, not the least serviceable of whom was the Englishwoman, Miss Horniman, who first provided the company a theatre. In a large sense the Irish Theatre must be considered a very successful local manifestation of a movement which was active throughout Europe.

The Irish Theatre is distinguished from other movements in theatre organization by the fact that it alone started as a movement among writers rather than among producers. At this point the spirit of the Irish renascence enters to distinguish this theatre. Of the earlier writers in this renascence few were dramatists. They were workers in a literature far removed from the rigorous rules of the theatre. The Irish theatre was the result of the marrying of the Irish lyrical and story-telling genius with the renascence of the theatre in other countries. The men who were responsible were those who had been in contact with the latest movements on

the continent. William Butler Yeats was a mystic and decadent who had been in Paris during the days of Antoine's experiment with the Théâtre Libre. George Moore had been educated in the French studios. In 1891 he had worked for a free theatre in London; in 1892 he had written for this theatre *The Strike at Arlingford.* Edward Martyn was the writer of the most severely Ibsenic play of the decade. Like Yeats, J. M. Synge had cultivated his mind on the Continent before he turned his pen to the treatment of primitive folk of his own race. Only Lady Gregory had been untouched by the movements of other countries and now maintained her pure Irish outlook.

Though the Irish theatre started as a part of a world movement, it contrived to make a most significant contribution to this movement. The organizers were fortunate in their lack of resources in the theatre. While the Englishman and the Frenchman had to discard the old before he could establish a new institution, the Irishman was hampered by no heavy theatrical machinery that could hang like an incubus on his efforts. This poverty in resources compelled the development of the virtues that have been most serviceable, the virtues of a true amateur spirit, of a natural code of acting, of simple and unspoiled composition of plays. It compelled the organizers to begin at the beginning and gave them all the advantages of so beginning in the possibility provided for educating audience, players, and playwrights.

The Irish Theatre has had a significant place in the history of the recent English movements of the theatre.

This theatre has been for England as well as for Ireland a trying ground, an experiment in the return to first principles. No one could do these things so well as the Irish. On their own stage their light shines far beyond their own land. They have naturalness, character, a knack of reality. As long as this theatre remains true to the principles for which it was established, it cannot fail by stimulus and example to be of first importance to the theatre of England.

CHAPTER X

George Bernard Shaw

No man in the modern English theatre has been subjected to so much confused thinking as George Bernard Shaw. The most talked about man of his time, he has been most misunderstood, or most variously understood. We fear that the subject of Shaw has been made unnecessarily difficult. It has been subjected to that faculty of "common nonsense", to that "invincible determination to tell and be told lies about everything" to which he refers when he writes of the Anglo-Saxon people.

Whatever Shaw is, he is not primarily a dramatist. Before he came to the writing of plays he had expressed himself as lecturer, writer on social and economic topics, novelist, and critic. A playwright in the sense in which that term is used for Molière or Shakespeare, for Sheridan or Pinero, he has never become. His plays have never achieved to anything like popularity or even general acceptance in the theatre. In spite of his great influence, an audience does not as yet exist that can support them for long on the stage. Furthermore, he has not tried to write plays which can stand on their

own feet without explanation or glossary. His plays are both more and less than plays. They are less in that they require prefaces, expanded business and characterization to complete their meaning. They are more in that after the purposes of representation are satisfied, the author goes on to serve other purposes which lie in the field of exposition and argument.

By some Shaw has been given credit for creating the modern English theatre. Far from building the modern English theatre, Shaw would not exist as a dramatist but for the building that others had done before him, work which he adopted and turned to his own purposes. Shaw was the first playwright in England to find ready for him instrumentalities for the unhampered expression of his point of view. The two instrumentalities upon which Shaw has depended are: first, the publication of plays in book form; and second, the free organization of the theatre. Without these he would not exist as playwright, and both these instruments were supplied by others. Shaw seized the drama as the best means of exploiting his own vision of truth.

Just what was the point of view, the test of truth to which Shaw desired to give currency? He has made it his business to subject everything in the mental world to as stable and undeluded a standard of personal judgment as the British Islands have known since Swift. Shaw very early revealed his formula. He has played with it and misrepresented it, but it has remained since his early youth. The first feature by which it may be known is Shaw's peculiar quality of revolt. From his earliest youth, when he joined successively the

Zetetical Society, the Land Reform Union, the Social Democratic Federation, and the Fabian Society, he has been an apostle of revolt, but revolt rationalized and made secure by numbers and by common sense. Here lies the first key to Shaw's apparent inconsistency. An absolutist in mental processes, he is a pragmatist in action. Arguing against the institution of the family, he would live in this institution as long as it survives. Believing in a reconstruction of society, he neither believes in getting it too soon nor in such changes as would shake the foundations of the social bond. Always stepping apart, he is never willing to stand alone. In other words, his mind and his pen were to be free, but his body and his person had to live in the world.

This characteristic is explained by the next qualification of his mind. Shaw is a thorough participant. That philosophy of the citizenship of the artist for which Ibsen stood finds a true expression in his life. He has been from the start interested in everything and has made all things his own affair. But participation did not mean for him working in a land office, explaining new electrical devices, and learning the tricks of men. His participation was mental. The mental quality of his participation was revealed in the first letter he wrote to the papers, a letter censuring the Moody and Sankey "revival" system in religion. He has felt the obligation not so much to put his shoulder to the wheel, his hand to the whip, as his mind to the problem. He knew that mental participation is the most unusual as well as the most valuable kind. There are many men who will follow the easy morality of

fidelity to a cause to one man who will study the sources of the morality of that cause. It is this gift of mental participation, and not altogether, as many have supposed, his Irish contrariness, that has made Shaw inject a new standard of judgment into issues that seemed to be settled.

But Shaw is not a philosopher. One who searches through his works for a consistent explanation of the principles of things is doomed to disappointment. Shaw is no more a constructor of a watertight system of truth than was Ibsen, but for a different reason. Ibsen was primarily an artist and therefore interested, not in the cause, but in the concrete. Shaw is a tester of values, and therefore more interested in man's experiments and essays toward truth than in any abstract vision of truth. That quality of participation which he represents disqualifies him for philosophy. The philosopher is not a mental participant in the world. He is a man who uses his mind to deny the concrete aspects of the world. Shaw uses his mind to react to the concrete aspects of the world. His mental participation consists in an honest mental evaluation of things around about him. For this task he is well equipped by keenness and common sense and lack of gullibility. His personal equation is slight. Because he is so honest and so well instrumented it is said he subjects everything to himself. But he makes no codes, spins no definitions, searches out no first causes.

Though he has no philosophy he has a test that is so absolute as to amount almost to a philosophy. It is hard, self-sufficing, and immediate in its judgments.

This test qualifies all he does in criticism, commentary, censure, and in playwriting. By some it is called rationalism, or intellectualism. These terms would serve if they are made to seem sufficiently inclusive. Shaw's test, which he insists lies at the heart of all men if they only keep themselves alert to listen to it, is the test of that logic of events which is working its way through men and all the forces of the world. It is not a principle of Will, for it lies outside of men as well as within them. Here and there he calls it the Life Force. Scholastic reason too often runs counter to the Life Force. Shaw would identify human reason with the workings of the Life Force. He is a believer in the human reason, a disciple of Samuel Butler in believing that all the Life Force has achieved it stores away within the man, to speak thereafter in the quieter voice of intuition. Intuition with him is as cold in judging according to the eternal process of nature as reason has always been in judging by its arbitrary and man-made codes. And though he is no scientist or vivisectionist, he has no more respect for the softer virtues than have these. His attitudes are as rigorously assumed, are as little subject to sentiments of kindness or goodness or mercy as are those of the stoics or materialists.

Shaw is first, last, and all the time a critic. He searches the object of his criticism for its underlying ideas and subjects these to the test of his logic of events. Most of his criticism is of two classes: First, art criticism, of music, literature, painting, drama; second, criticism of society's formulated ideas in religion, politics, and morality. His art criticism is of a specific

type. It is revealed in all of his attitudes toward art, in his plays and writings. "Artist philosophers are the only sort of persons I take seriously", he says. Art is to him the expression in resolute self-control of the processes of the hidden logic of life. The only function of art is the interpretation, the systematizing of the life forces. All that gives entertainment, that supplies pleasure, the beauty that is its own justification, he cares nothing for. And he cares nothing for the patter of the studios. When, after his unsuccessful efforts as a novelist, he turned to musical and dramatic criticism on *The Star*, *The World*, *The Scot's Observer*, and *The Saturday Review*, he brought to it the same faculties of mind he had shown in his earlier revolts and in his novels. It was a mind resolutely set on its own tangential view, a fundamental code of judgment, a distrust of all formulas of whatever type, even his own, and a complete lack of all sense of form and of all regard for technical considerations as such in art. He brought to bear upon art and music certainly a stimulating, even a renovating, method, but it was a method which would have had no validity in criticism up to his time. And he criticizes social ideas in the same way. He tests men as if they were art and art as if it were man. Against formulas of belief, of conduct, or control, against rubber-stamp judgments imputing virtue or vice by codes his first tendency is to turn aside. He always keeps his mind free of entangling alliances of faith or enthusiasm.

Shaw sells his wares. In a day of universal education, universal reading, and universal franchise, broad

currency in ideas and standards must be the ideal. If a thing is good enough to exist it is good enough to distribute. If it is not good enough to distribute it should not be. Shaw knows that very effective systems have been invented by men for giving currency to the wares of commerce. He finds that the wares themselves are not cheapened by the mode of distributing them. In fact it is only the honest ware that can be distributed long. He asks whether honest thinking is any less worthy of distribution than honest merchandise. If it is not it too will only gain its end by the means which will give it broadest currency. It is important to understand in Shaw the combination of honesty and originality in wares and a remarkable faculty for their distribution. In this way he expresses his policy: "Spare no labor to find out the right thing to say; and then say it with the most exasperating levity, as if it were the first thing that would come into any one's head."

Shaw has not come to any of his work full fledged. In fact, he has never as yet attained command of any technique. He has been so prodigal of ideas that he has found it difficult to give them body. And he has not stinted work in the attempt. His novels, written between 1880 and 1883, are interesting as showing the fund of his ideas and the difficulty he found in their management. They attack the same institutions he was later to attack in his plays. In *The Irrational Knot, Love Among the Artists, Cashel Byron's Profession, The Unsocial Socialist,* we have middle-class bigotry, pallid ascetic artists, women pursuing men, rational breakings of moral codes, the problems of wealth, the

crime of poverty, ridicule of the ideas of sport and heroism, just as we have them in the plays. But the construction quite unfitted the novels for use. No one would buy wares done up in such a package. He seems always to have been lost between the necessity of furthering his mental flights and the necessity of providing a medium of action for his narrative. The result was a wild hodgepodge, undoubtedly original, and no less truly without design or sequence. What Shaw needed to find was a naked medium for the expression of his ideas, a medium of art that would permit the maximum of theorizing and a minimum of narrative. This he found in the drama. With no affection for drama as such, Shaw seized upon it as the means of putting over his ideas.

That Shaw looked upon the drama as an instrument only is revealed in the manner in which he handled the form. From the first he did not attempt to make the play self-sufficing. He combined it with all other forms of writing necessary to express his ideas. The play now comes to have a special function. It is not concerned with the telling of a story or the creation of characters. It is the precipitation of many mental reactions on things of moment at the time. No other form offers the facilities to an author to express many points of view without tying himself to any, to perform laboratory experiments with ideas by identifying them with characters who speak for themselves and not the author. In this way the play protects the author far more than does the novel. But when he has thrown the idea to his characters to play with, Shaw shows

where his real interest lies in summing up his own contribution to the discussion in a preface sometimes as long as the play itself.

This instrumental treatment of drama has raised a new kind of play. After his first attempts at playwriting Shaw discards all traditions of dramatic construction and proceeds to write plays upon new designs. To understand his play we have to consider the materials out of which it is made. Until recent times plays have belonged to three orders according to substance. First, there was the idealistic play, which was constructed out of the magnified ideals of a romantic code. To this class belong both the so-called classic plays and the romantic plays of Shakespeare. This order of play has deteriorated through the stereotyping of its ideals, and through sentimentalizing. Second, there is the kind of play that takes the manners of a people or a circle as indexes of its character and civilization. To this class belong the satires of manners and social conventions of Molière and the comedies of the English Restoration. Plays of this type are never subject to the abuse under which romance suffers, being protected by the acid of wit.

The third type of play, for which the nineteenth century was largely responsible, was the realistic play, which attempted to place upon the stage the presentment of reality in its bodily semblances, neither magnified nor idealized. We cannot yet say that this attempt has been successful. At its best it is not altogether true to type, as its real substance is often confused with a didactic intent. When the extraneous

element of purpose is omitted, the problems of observation and choice become so pressing as to be insoluble.

Shaw belongs to none of these classes. Yet he displays characteristics of all three. He applies to a new substance traits derived from the romantic play, from the play of manners and from the realistic play. The material of his plays is the mental substance in which modern life is lived. He believes that the most important thing in modern life is the ideas out of which we make the world we live in, that in truth men and women have moved into a zone of thought. In this zone they meet, they govern their action by its laws, they incorporate its rigors into their characters. In such a zone men and women are very much aware of the thought value of all phenomena, and the best of them become personified mental points of view. Shaw asks of all his characters how they react mentally to the world they live in. Are they merely parrots, do they think like books, are their thoughts provided for them, are they myopic with convention, do they stand against the wind, have they normal vision?

We may identify Shaw's characters by the fact that they are all talking characters. Gone are all the inhibitions, the inversions that conduce to silence. There never has been such a gallery of freely expressive individuals. Only such a poet as Marchbanks speaks in innuendos. All the rest are volleys of speech. This explains and justifies his long speeches. They are not long with bombast. They are long because the speaker has something to say. Many of Shaw's characters seem but lately to have discovered the faculty of speech.

So they talk with zest. These people are all talking about their own business — which is everybody's business. They are self-elected representatives in the congress of opinion which is modern democracy. Other plays deal with ideas in solution. Shaw's deal with them in contest. The ideas, even the talk, become dramatic. Where there had been the struggle of wills there is the struggle of ideas and the struggle of speech.

Shaw has called himself a dramatic realist and has repudiated the well-made play and the tricks of romanticism. But there are factors of the romantic in the free imagination that he uses in the structure of the play. In planning the play there is no dependence upon imitation of social forms. He is fanciful, even fantastic, in arranging the plots that will release his ideas. From the play of manners he takes the grace of wit, the dependence upon the surface as an index of the soul. And from the realistic play he takes men and women in their natural magnitudes and environments, constructing out of commonplace individuals a structure of social suggestiveness. All of this is delivered in a thoroughly individual way, with no care for form and no limitations derived either from the necessity of production or the principles of tact and balance. Shaw's carelessness in construction is a thing of principle. Having no respect for art canons as such, he pays no attention to them. He has been called an Ibsenian. No evidence of this is shown in any of his plays, except that they deal with a society that has been fed on Ibsenic and pseudo-Ibsenic ideas.

Shaw has created very few characters. None of his

characters live outside the idea symbolized. Shaw is quite willing to make a character talk outside his own nature, and to introduce characters who sound no necessary note in the orchestra. The truth is that Shaw is not interested in characters except as vehicles of ideas. The play itself is a fabric not of character but of the conceptions that generate character. And so the dramatic with Shaw comes not from a clash of characters but from a clash of ideas. This does not mean that he ignores men and women or fails to realize them. He realizes them only in their ideas. If ideas run riot it is because the character speaking is skilled in intellectual analysis. Shaw measures a man partly by his articulateness. So he never loses his character in his discourse. His clashes are mental and at the same time dramatic and unforced. When emotion appears it is as a coloring of thought, as a shooting through of the idea with the pressure of life. Let no one think that by reading the speeches of the most eloquent of Shaw's characters he is finding out Shaw. That character may be the most deluded in his gallery. Shaw does not guide his characters in their thinking. It is rather through the character that does not think that Shaw's own opinions are revealed, cloaked in a hearty scorn.

One hears continually of Shaw's wit and paradox. He is too honest a man to satisfy himself with any such easy scheme as denial of the apparent. His wit is partly for the purpose of selling his wares. It is partly a preservative of his thought. Too much has been made of his whimsies, his turnings about, his surprises. Upon those who see only folly in him we may expect

the shafts of his satire to fall. Those who look for the jester find nothing better nor worse. But he is unwilling to permit a legend of himself to develop. The man who turns the white light on patriotism, on Cæsar, on Napoleon, on Christianity, and love, could hardly permit the accretion of folklore about himself in his lifetime.

At the time that Shaw was facing his career as a dramatist he had gone so far in his career that A. B. Walkley could call him in *The Fortnightly* "one of the most courageous, most lucid, most remorselessly logical thinkers of the day, and the invasion of the theatre by such a man is an event bound to leave its mark." Shaw was to wait long for the realization of his promise. He had written dramas steadily for ten years, and had ten plays to his credit, before he came into success as a produced dramatist. By 1903 he had written *Widowers' Houses, The Philanderer, Mrs. Warren's Profession, Arms and the Man, Candida, The Man of Destiny, You Never Can Tell, The Devil's Disciple, Cæsar and Cleopatra, Captain Brassbound's Conversion.* Of these the first had been played without success by the Independent Theatre (December 9, 1892); the second had been turned down by Mr. Grein; the third had been refused a license by the censor. *Arms and the Man* had been played for about four months at the Avenue Theatre, beginning April 21, 1894. *You Never Can Tell* had been rehearsed by Cyril Maude in 1897 and withdrawn without production. The same year Janet Achurch (Mrs. Charles Charrington) had taken *Candida* to the provinces. *The Devil's Disciple*

had been played by Richard Mansfield in America. In 1900 *Candida* had been played for six matinées in London. In all this period there had been only one London success. In 1898, having failed on the stage, Shaw determined to print his plays, and the first seven in the above list were printed under the title *Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant.* The remaining three followed under the title of *Plays for Puritans.* The success of the plays in printed form prepared the way for trial on the stage. In 1904 Vedrenne and Barker opened the Court Theatre with a repertory predominantly of Shaw. And with the composition of *Man and Superman* Shaw enters on the high stage of his career.

In his early plays Shaw attempted to write for the stage of conventions. *Widowers' Houses* had been begun in collaboration with William Archer as early as 1885. It was not taken up again until 1892, when it was completed by Shaw alone for the Independent Theatre. Shaw's first three plays were marred by an animus of censure he was not to show in his later plays. *Widowers' Houses* was directed against slum landlordism; *The Philanderer* was a shaft against false Ibsenites and those who feared the logic of Ibsenism, aiming as well to expose "the grotesque sexual compacts made between men and women"; *Mrs. Warren's Profession* was a tract on false standards of respect between parents and children and a false system of public morality that drives women to the business of prostitution. The plays remind one of Shaw's novels in the impression they give of irksomeness and incomplete realization of powers. They are subject to the charge of arbitrarily attacking

a current formula in order to set up another formula no less false. Only a few characters stand out, notably Grace and Charteris from *The Philanderer*, and Vivie and Crofts from *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. The hardness of the author's treatment is relieved by few pleasant subterfuges of wit.

In his later plays Shaw avoids the mistakes of his first plays. Wrong thinking is examined, but the author does not again make the mistake of exchanging tweedledum for tweedledee. He now begins to play with ideas rather than exhaustively to work with them. He becomes more impudent. As he does so his hand becomes more free. He takes an attitude of free public discussion, censorious but not destructive. For a man who answers so few questions as does Shaw, whose function is provocative rather than regulative, this attitude is better than that of particularized attack.

If you are going to throw away romance you may at any rate use anti-romance to good effect. By so doing you secure some of the thrill of romance and the wit of satire. In many of his plays, notably *Arms and the Man, Captain Brassbound's Conversion, The Devil's Disciple, The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet,* Shaw continues to use a plot of the most romantic and melodramatic character. That *Arms and the Man* started with any purpose of social correction cannot be believed. The author probably undertook it with the intention of writing a good stage play and was diverted from the normal by his own particular vision of truth. If one thinks only of the story he is lost in admiration for the ingenuity and freshness of the author's plotting.

It is a true comic opera plot, joining with *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* in a display of a fantastic gift. There is a Gilbertian touch in Shaw's treatment of warfare as a business-like thing and in the victory of the business-like Bluntschli, owner of hotels and unromantic warrior, over the idealist Saranoff. This play developed some elements of popularity and ran for twelve weeks at the Avenue Theatre.

Shaw has often been accused of taking his themes by contraries from the popular interests of the time. He is careful to explain that rather than seeing by opposites he sees more normally than ordinary men. The action of *Candida* Shaw sets in the midst of the theories of social meliorism that were common in the nineties. The church of the Reverend James Mavor Morell is managed on the principle of a social center. Mr. Burgess, the impossible father of Candida, has filled himself with the terms of social unrest. Though Shaw usually saved himself from the charge of any particular program by the scattering of his rays, *Candida* displays a certain cogency and intensity of feeling. The play seems to be woven of two fabrics. The one is the social fabric of reform, represented by Morell's public life, his sermons, his worshipers and hangers-on. The other is the domestic life of the Morell household, a little psychic area of intimate contacts that has been more illuminated than any such tract in modern dramatic literature. All the characters live in the zones of extreme civilization. Morell lives in an aura of eloquence. Candida is a woman who knows the thought value of her sex. Sex is not only a disquieting fact

to her; it is a phenomenon which she holds under the scrutiny of her intelligence. For this reason she has no pruderies and affectations. And because she understands herself she understands men and applies to them no cruder judgment than herself demands. And Marchbanks is one of Shaw's only characters to live on the level of the higher reason. All the others have normal or subnormal insight. He has supernormal insight. When these three characters come together there is pure drama.

As drama one prefers to let this play speak for itself. To the writer it seems to be the nearest realization to the drama of developed intelligences that our time has brought forth. It is the kind of drama Browning would have written had he used another medium than verse. The play cannot be called fantasy, for its thought structure is too logical and articulate. It is not realism. One thinks of it in connection with some of the more confiding plays of Ibsen as showing how far Shaw's joyous medium goes beyond Ibsen's sentimental medium. The play has fewer Shavianisms than any of his others. It is true it has Prossy and Burgess, but they hardly enter the play as one remembers it. In this play we see appearing the questions of art and sex that come up again in *Man and Superman* and *The Doctor's Dilemma.* In *Man and Superman* the Life Force is victorious. In *Candida* the artist is victorious.

Candida is an answer to the feminists, but she is an answer to the "majerful man" as well. She is a dangerous advocate to take on either side of the vexed questions of sex relationship. Chief among Shaw's

characters she represents his ideal of reasonableness tempered by humor. It is significant that the best of Shaw's "commonsense" characters should be a woman. *Candida* was not produced in London until 1904, when it made a part of the Court Theatre repertory.

Among the ideas by which society runs itself is that of the hero. Men are continually building themselves gods to worship. Shaw has no objection to such a process so far as society is concerned, but he thinks we should be careful to distinguish between the human original and the figure society makes of him. And he thinks too that we should continually subject our heroes to the test of common sense and the human standard. Some men he believes are enjoying a place in history disproportionate to the value of their contributions. This is what may be called the unearned increment of fame. Some men squat themselves down at a corner in history and wait for events to build a city there. It is not so much Shaw's idea that they should be dispossessed as that they be seen in true relation to the contribution made by society. The figures Shaw attacks are Napoleon, Shakespeare, Julius Cæsar and Cleopatra, and Catherine the Great.

Napoleon is treated in the one-act play, *The Man of Destiny*, written for Richard Mansfield but refused by him. The part of the woman was later played by Ellen Terry. Napoleon is shown as a little boor who set himself down at the junction of the nineteenth century and the French Revolution and permitted destiny to take care of his fame. Not only their own power elevates Julius Cæsar and Cleopatra. It is the power

of romance in the imaginations of great poets. Of these the chief weaver of illusions of majesty has been Shakespeare. So great has been Shakespeare's gift as a dreamer of lofty dreams that he himself has been raised to an eminence among the heroes. Shaw impudently and unsuccessfully attacks this illusion in *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, written some years later. In *Cæsar and Cleopatra* Shaw treats the great figures of antiquity in a more kindly manner. Here we have treated in human guise beings who by other pens had been reared into glowing abstractions. The sketchy Cæsar of Shakespeare is given some warmth and humanity in Shaw's wise and witty elderly gentleman, and the idea of a young Cleopatra with unawakened potentialities is a stroke of genius. This is one of Shaw's plays that outdoes romance in a real fervor of corrective imagination. It would seem that if Candida is Shaws' best beloved heroine Cæsar is his best beloved hero. As played by Forbes-Robertson he is a masterpiece. Shaw returns to historical portraiture in *The Great Catherine*, a farcical bit of horseplay, revolving about the great Russian Queen.

You Never Can Tell is the play in which Shaw finally learned to handle his materials with careless grace. He had been trying to write "good" plays for some time. Now he gives up the effort and determines to write Shaw plays. Cyril Maude has told us something of the circumstances of the composition of *You Never Can Tell*. Never was a play written with less regard for the laws of composition. The present critic is unable to look upon this play as anything else than a huge joke. Who

are the characters you would not expect to see on the stage? A dentist and a waiter. What themes seem closed to comedy treatment? The bickerings of a miserable married couple; the disrespect of children for elders. It was Shaw's opinion that the stage carpenter had been tinkering not only with stage plays, but that he had put his hand to life until life itself had become a matter of tricks and effects, of speeches and properties, of "effective" motives, ideals of sacrifice, climaxes, and workmanlike arrangements of events. In an age when the world was beginning to make itself a stage, the best the stage could do would be to make itself as tantalizing as possible, to shake itself free from the reflections back and forth between a regulated life and a regulated theatre, even if it had to break the mirrors. There is something in the title *You Never Can Tell* that reminds one of the easy carelessness of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night; or, What You Will.* In almost every other play seen on the stage you always could tell. And that was what was the trouble with the stage. The natural part of the world lives by fits and snatches. Dentists' chairs are scenes in everyday life. Waiters have advocates for sons. Children do not respect their parents, and often parents do not deserve it. Many families are better apart than together, especially families of "talkers", and waiters are men who must have a philosophy of some kind, otherwise they could not be good waiters. This is one of the most delightful of Shaw's plays.

The Devil's Disciple is another melodrama, deftly securing by inversion of melodramatic principles the

thrill of the real thing. Here is all the material of the heroic play. A brave man takes the place of another in danger. The bad man shows the good streak, the beneficiary refuses to accept the gift and goes forth for succor; there is a providential escape from death at the last moment, — all these expedients and more are present, but they are treated in a way that throws light on Shaw's theories of literary psychology and particularly on his theories of goodness. *The Devil's Disciple* might as well be called *You Never Can Tell*, as indeed might most of his plays. You never can tell what motives may govern men and women in their deeds. They may be the motives that the world of books has taught us are the acceptable ones. They may be and probably are other motives. As a guide to these motives Shaw is much more disposed to trust the Devil than any of the more approved deities, as he shows in *Blanco Posnet* and the Scene in Hell in *Man and Superman* as well as in *The Devil's Disciple*.

Captain Brassbound's Conversion is another comic opera play with Gilbertian story but no lyrics. Its stage settings are Moroccan. Its characters are English, an army officer, a nephew turned brigand, a London Cockney for relief, native chiefs and pirates and a leading woman of unbroken sheen of exterior. By no standard are any of the characters or actions true save by the standard we apply to *The Pirates of Penzance*. In his early plays much had come from Shaw's desire to set things straight. Now much comes from his desire to set things crooked. It is impossible to believe that there is anything but trickery and good

spirits in this play. Through the action appear snatches of imperialism, Kiplingism, manifest destiny, the doctrine of the dominant race. The part of Lady Cicely Wayneflete provided Ellen Terry one of her most charming rôles.

With *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* Shaw comes to the end of his first phase. In the plays of this period he seemed always to have an eye out for a convention that he could smash. Much as he violates many of the requirements of the manager he writes the plays as if for production. After this play he seems to change his attitude toward the play. He now treats it more as a printed document and makes fewer efforts to adapt himself to the demands of the stage. His speeches become longer and the plays more diffuse. The play now becomes a discussion play, almost completely giving up any attempt at a realistic interpretation of life. It is fantastic, often rather mad, in its arrangements. Its value lies in the uncovering of mental issues rather than in truth to external appearances. In Shaw's early plays there had been some contact with flesh and blood reality. In his later ones no one would look for the actions of the world. The actions are generalized into a world of free agents in which every one does and speaks according to principles that will most clearly evoke a hard and glittering sense of truth.

These characteristics come to a height in *Man and Superman*. The play is too long for performance by the length of a very talky third act. That the play is a revolt against conventional systems of romance goes

without saying. It is far more than this, and our sympathies for it, our ability to accept it, depend upon our ability to translate ourselves into a world almost free from the control of traditions. The only fault with Ann and John is that they are too true to live. They are in fact the truest figures in recent writing in that they most achieve the spirit of self-directing intelligence. The only others to compare with them are Philip and Jessica in Barker's *The Madras House*. To justify such epitomes of the time as these two we have to imagine a super-logical world almost as regular as that of farce. Far more true to the muddling, deluded world is Ricky, just as you will find more Huckstables and E. P. States than Constantines and Philips. Violet also is an easier figure to understand, for she is simply a reaction against the idea of the wronged woman. Ann and John are too much the products of the author's conception to be reactions against anything.

Let no one think this is not a drama because the author presses his theme beyond human nature. In the handling of the chief characters there is more than sportiveness. Ann's struggle goes down to the deepest sources of drama. It would be hard to find in the theatre an equivalent for Ann's struggle to fulfill the law of her being, her struggle for the right to project her life at the expense of the freedom of a man and her own journey into the valley of the shadow. Heretofore the dramatic has been concerned with the sense of death. This is a drama of the persistent forces of life. And John's struggle and surrender are no less dramatic. He too must accept the law. Properly Shaw has

couched his theme in flashing words and ideas that conceal deep springs, but one reads lightly if he sees only farce in *Man and Superman,* or the fantastic in the uncovering of great new areas of struggle in old human nature.

This note of the intense passion of an unfolding world has something akin to tragedy in it. The sense of the catharsis of tragedy that one gets from Maeterlinck's scene of the unborn in *The Blue Bird* is found not seldom in Shaw's work. *Candida, Man and Superman, The Doctor's Dilemma, The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet, Androcles and the Lion, Pygmalion* uncover deep places in a becoming world. The laws of such drama have not yet been worked out. There is something of tragedy in it, the tragedy not of endings and surrenders but of processes, of the unfulfilled, the tragedy of the waiting factor in a large and inscrutable and inevitable plan. No one so well reveals this in an appropriate medium as does Shaw. Tchekhov has not the mood. Andreyev has not the medium. Barker thins it down until it loses force. But these are the only ones who seize on the poignant values of growth, the tragedy of the corn that comes before the full ear.

This strain is in many of Shaw's plays, but not developed. It is the dramatic motive under a chaos of conversation by which responsible people are trying to arrive at truth. After *Man and Superman* Shaw seemed disposed to take more particular questions and treat them particularly. In *John Bull's Other Island,* written for the Irish theatre but too large a structure for this little stage, we have another discussion play

treating in much witty dialogue one of the liveliest problems in the policy of John Bull. Though an Irishman, Shaw has never been one to take a sentimental attitude toward Ireland. In *John Bull's Other Island* the author treats Ireland with the wit of an Irishman and from the general vantage ground of a citizen of the British Empire. He is as far as possible from the Ireland that is represented by *Cathleen ni Houlihan.* But he never takes sides. It is a continual battledore and shuttlecock between Broadbent and Doyle, the English and Irish members of the firm. And Shaw matches the often-expressed truth that Ireland is good for England, with the idea that without England to keep it alive the much vaunted Irish spirit would dwindle and die.

How He Lied to Her Husband is a little bit in which Shaw subjects his own legend to the scrutiny he had before used on Napoleon and Cæsar. It stands in the same class as *Fanny's First Play* as a "cooling card", not for himself but for his idolators.

In *Major Barbara* (1905) Shaw discusses more explicitly the problems of force and warfare that he had touched in *Arms and the Man.* Here the discussion refers away from the practice of arms itself to the social psychology that goes into the training of the fighting arm of a nation. In a day when democracy is teaching more and more the disparity between spiritual ideals and brute facts, what shall be the attitude toward munitions of war and their commercial exploitation? More, how shall we conserve stamina in men while teaching them charity? And how shall we

adapt the militant ideal of the other cheek as expressed in the Salvation Army with the militant ideal of the first blow? In such a consideration as this the nature and perpetuity of the State are clearly involved. Shaw takes these questions up again in a historic setting in *Androcles and the Lion.*

Getting Married (1908) is another play of pure discussion. The play is altogether scattered in action and in speech. The author was able to find no centers around which to involve separate acts, so he writes the play in a unit without *entr'actes.* But there is something impudent in the suggestion in the preface that he is returning to the Greek ideal in a play that lives no life in the mind and has no beauty of form. The unreal situations are invented simply in order to display a catalogue of the faults of marriage. With this play is to be mentioned *Misalliance,* which even the audiences at the Duke of York's could not admire.

The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet (1909) is called "A Sermon in Crude Melodrama." The idea is to be referred to the same source as *The Devil's Disciple.* It is one of Shaw's most effective stage plays, and the only play in which the action as such is made to serve a symbolic purpose after the style of Ibsen's prose plays. In *The Doctor's Dilemma* we again see an attempt to heighten the value of action. But Shaw cannot handle a plot of action, so the episodes of this play serve only to confuse a theme in which there are several substantial motives. Behind the badly handled action there is the theme of the "right to life"

treated heroically. The stage had had its fill of plays defending the rights of the individual. But if there is an obligation to selection in birth there is a limitation to the duty of continuing life. With this theme there is combined the theme of artist versus mother-woman that Shaw had treated before. The play is almost invalidated by the animus shown against doctors, and in a lesser degree, against newspaper men, but in spite of its faults, the scene of the death of the artist is one of an astounding force.

In *Fanny's First Play* (1911) the author steps aside from his prepossessions and gives us a play about the stage. This is Shaw's most successful play. It has the Shaw attitude sufficiently thinned for the crowd, it introduces the critics, — who have been very useful to Shaw in his career, — it shows a play in process, and it provides a characteristic little Shaw play with a full quota of characters, attitudes, and witticisms. With all its popularity, it is one of his least valuable plays. Shaw is one man who should not repeat himself.

For five years Shaw had seemed to be in the doldrums. *Blanco Posnet* and *The Doctor's Dilemma* had revealed faults we had no reason to expect from the mature Shaw. *Fanny's First Play* had treated second-hand materials, and *Press Cuttings* and *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* were but trifles. But in his next two plays Shaw found himself again. *Androcles and the Lion* (1912) combines the corrective method of the history plays with the theme of *Major Barbara.* Shaw strips away the historic illusions from both the early

Christians and their persecutors, the Romans. Some call this play the Gospel of Peace. It seems as well to represent the Gospel of War. The most beautiful thing in the play, an achievement of the first magnitude, is the figure of the Lion.

Pygmalion represents not only the statue come to life through power of the artist's fervor of creation. It shows the next step in human responsibility after the doctrine of eugenics has been accepted. And this responsibility cannot be taken lightly. *Pygmalion* is a treatise on education. The scientist is to-day creating new life. There is still to be asked whether he has a house in which to put it. While tinkering away on cockneys, on the illiterate, giving them speech beyond their station, providing them half-baked ideas, have we been making room for them in the world for which we have been training them? This searching question stands at the end of Shaw's list of plays for the present.

Shaw the thinker must ever take precedence over Shaw the dramatist. Yet what he might have been as dramatist had he possessed more skill in handling action, is sufficiently revealed in some of his scenes of pure magic. Several moving scenes in *Cæsar and Cleopatra,* the death scene of the artist in *The Doctor's Dilemma,* the delightful turns of incident in *The Devil's Disciple,* Marchbanks's victory in *Candida,* the whole conception of the Lion and Androcles and the strong man in *Androcles and the Lion,* the regenerated flower girl turning for love to her creators in *Pygmalion,* Tanner's surrender to the Life Force in *Man and*

Superman, Blanco Posnet talking with God — for old-fashioned dramatic appeal these take a place second to nothing in English prose drama, and they are concealed in so much that is new-fashioned that one is likely to lose one magic in another.

CHAPTER XI

Dramatists of the Free Theatre

Aside from the work of two or three dramatists the annals of the drama of the first fifteen years of the twentieth century are written in the records of the new theatre organizations. The serious work that had been done by the pioneers and rebuilders had come to its fruition. Experimental theatre organizations had been provided. Though these as a rule lasted only a short time, they drew to themselves the most energetic workers, the playwrights of greatest sincerity. More than this, they showed the development of a clearly marked division among theatre audiences. With the coming of new organizations theatres came to be classed as majority and minority theatres. The majority theatre continues the traditions of the nineteenth century in types of plays and in business organization. It constitutes the place of amusement of the great numbers of English playgoers. But most of its plays are overlooked in a serious consideration of the output of the period. Opposed to the majority theatre the minority theatre busies itself in constructing new regulations in production and in playwriting.

It attaches to itself a small audience of increasing critical skill and fidelity to its interests. And it has taught criticism to look to it for stimulating new ideas. This theatre may well be called the Free Theatre, to distinguish it from the commercial theatre and to associate it with theatres of like spirit on the Continent.

One would expect an institution of this nature to exercise an influence over the kind of plays produced. This has been the case in a measure far out of proportion to the strength of the theatre in numbers or in critical acumen. There has developed a clearly-marked school of plays for the free theatre in England. The first demand of this theatre is that its plays be judged as art as distinguished from entertainment. All the plays of the free theatre have been marked by genuineness of substance and an artistic intent in composition. In all of them there has been a definite demand for truth in the execution of the work, a fidelity to life and to principles of form. Whatever the type of play, whether problem, fantastic, or discussion play, the first demand has been for the satisfaction of rigorous standards. This insistence upon standards has brought into the service of the free English theatre many men of ideals who have served the new theatre with vision and unselfish devotion. The influence has not only applied to the composition of plays. In these theatres have been created companies the like of which has not been seen in England for years. In spite of defections from the ranks there has been developed an ensemble standard of production. In staging the same influence has been felt. Not the

least important result of this system has been the creation of a new art, the art of the director of production.

There has also been a healthy change in the temper and attitude of public discussion on the play. Cultivated people are beginning to be cultivated in the theatre — by no means heretofore a thing to be assumed. Instead of concerning itself with the moral values of the theatre, and the vague obligation for the people to "do something", discussion has come to concern the critical and artistic elements of a production. This is because worthy productions are becoming more common and taste is becoming somewhat more expert. Always pertinent, Max Beerbohm's statement that the people always support a thing for moral reasons, and never for æsthetic reasons, is tending to require some modification as a larger critical public develops.

Along with the change in temper that has risen from the minority theatre there has been a change in the type of man who writes for the stage and in the attitude he takes toward it. The history of the theatre of the last twenty years has been a history of outsiders. Shaw has never been a success on the professional stage. Even Granville Barker, the most practical of all the new workers, was tutored in stage societies. Instead of looking for the plays of this theatre to men who have educated themselves only in the theatre, we see that the best contributions are now made by men who have educated themselves in other arts. Heretofore the novelist, who of all men may be pre-

sumed to have sent himself to school to the world, has been discouraged from writing for the stage on account of the supposed technical difficulties of the craft. He has now discovered that these difficulties are largely imaginary, that there is hardly a gift that one learns in the world that cannot be put to use on the stage. So there has been a great increase in the number of novelists who write for the stage. Meredith often spoke of the desire to see his works fitly put forth in the theatre, but had no time to make the attempt. But after him Barrie, Bennett, Galsworthy become ambidextrous.

There has been a change in the mood of the dramatists. Now having a machine of production upon which they can depend, their work is no longer hampered with the doubts and the uncertainties that so distracted the writer of the Victorian era. This sense of security has done much to give poise to plays, to render compromise unnecessary, to permit free flow of imagination and technical experiment. It has also made drama more joyous. It would be interesting to inquire how much of the bitterness and misanthropy of the early realists arose from discontent at the limitations of their medium. Certainly while fighting falsehood in the world Ibsen was quite as vigorously fighting it in the theatre. From such moods the recent English playwright has been relieved.

One would expect that with all these facilities provided ready to their hands there would have been no dearth of great plays for the theatre. There can in-

deed be no complaint of the skill, the command of truth, the delicacy, the social serviceableness of the new plays. The English stage has seldom within a like period been provided with so considerable a body of adequate plays. And yet as one surveys the list, the conclusion is one of disappointment. The plays of the free theatre possess every attribute of great work save the attribute of great imagination. In freeing themselves of the controls of a technique of artifice the dramatists had forged a chain no less strong. The rational canons of objective truth, continually checked by reference to the laws of psychology and by suspicion of the validity of fancy and emotion, made good critical principles no doubt, but they did not foster living works of imagination. The result was to make exact but little plays, to limit the moving source of the play to the scientifically demonstrable. The plays of the minority theatre almost all follow the codes of rationalism. They are expert, well turned; they ring true, but they are little. Very few of them have any vitality except that of thought. Their significance extends no further than the action of the play itself. England had been asking for bread, and while they did not give her a stone, they did give her a piece of well-made concrete.

In these plays the social motive is retained from the preceding age in the same manner as this age had clung to the romantic motive. And, like the romantic motive, the social motive had lost its vitality for art. When it had first come into plays it appeared with all the passion of rebellion. It was fraught with enthusi-

asms; it contained enough of danger to give it intensity. But now the motive of social justice, of the war of the classes, has lost force because it is no longer an issue for art. Though not realized in life its issues have been accepted in men's thinking. The spirit of revolt has now been subjected to reasonable observation, and this too has quieted its fever. Though these motives are out of date the dramatists of the little theatres, with few exceptions, have clung to the old formulas, and dissected to a needle point the old problems. Galsworthy and St. John Hankin and Stanley Houghton would have been surprised if they had been told that they were raking over old papers. Yet in their art they were neglecting the first demand of all true art, that it search out unseen values, that it experiment in the revelation of hidden truth. Paradoxical as it may seem, the theatre that was itself built upon a doctrine of experiment encouraged a group of safe and sane "academic" playwrights. The theatre that was rooted in individualism flowered in schools.

In an effort to adapt the old formula to new uses there comes a group of cynical plays dedicated to the rights of the individual. These plays were based upon the same formula as had been used so effectively by Turgenev in *Fathers and Sons*, the story of the struggle between generations for the ideals of each. But that struggle differs as between the mid-nineteenth century and the twentieth century. In Turgenev it was a struggle between the old order and the new order of social idealism. The old order was being destroyed

under the force of a moral passion for the service of men, the sounding of the evangel of humanity. There was tragedy, but it was sweetened by the promise that underlay the pain of change. The new play continues the formula of the old struggle. But the struggle has lost vitality because it is no longer directed by love of humanity. It is now a struggle for the petty rights of an individual. It deals either with the right to individual joy, or the effort to adapt the moral revolt of a period of idealism to the cold systems of new business. Under such conditions there is no wonder that technique changed and shrunk. There was no longer fire in the theme. So the play itself became structurally meticulous, cold and intellectualistic. Drama can hardly go further in this direction than *The Voysey Inheritance, Milestones, Rutherford and Son* go in the treatment of business psychology, and than *Hindle Wakes, The Younger Generation, The Eldest Son* or *The Last of the DeMullins* go in the defense of the right to life.

Part of this appearance of a studied exactness comes from the fact that the writers of the free theatres were keeping themselves aware of the latest developments on the Continent. A continental education was prerequisite to success in this theatre. All knew Ibsen, but his influence was past. Few dared to write in his manner. The continental types that were most followed belonged to that new *genre sérieux* that had come in with the end of the century. A hundred years after Diderot, the genre which he had introduced had come to form in the successors of Augier. Becque

had introduced to the stage the chaotic substance of society itself, a little embittered with his view of life. His followers had infused method into the serious study of the phenomena of society. Brieux had supplied the laboratory system whereby social phenomena are tried out on the stage. His interest was not in characters but in their actions under his tests. His method may be called the deductive method. And Hervieu, among others, had used the inductive method. He had been interested first in the law and had studied men and women as agents and exemplars of the law. It was to the works of such men as these that the English dramatist looked for the laws of his playwriting.

Among the dramatists of the free theatre John Galsworthy (born 1867) first demands attention. Next to Shaw in popularity, Galsworthy is noteworthy for the command he has attained in the novel and the play. Galsworthy came to the composition of plays with a social doctrine fully developed in his practice of the novel. It is said that as a novelist Galsworthy had been rather strongly influenced by Turgenev. He showed in his novels a strong sense of social obligation couched in severely poised construction and restrained language. In other words, he was a thorough social idealist and a thorough artist as well. His work revealed the melancholy of the Slav, and the characteristic vigor of the Briton.

Galsworthy did not transfer to the art of the theatre the temper he had displayed as a novelist. When he came to write plays he added to the characteristics of a Turgenev the technical outlook of a Brieux. He

undertook playwriting as no artistic enterprise but as an opportunity in propaganda. Given a set of opinions to express, drama provided him a more immediate and emphatic mode of expression than any other art. With him a play is a studious documenting of a social case without partisanship and without heat. The many difficulties of this style of playwriting Galsworthy overcame at a bound. He surrendered to none of the temptations to make his play conventionally dramatic.

Galsworthy possesses in a remarkable degree the ability to discover the dramatic in natural and unforced situations. In order to secure a moving climax he does not, as Pinero sometimes does, develop false themes, or with Jones make himself a violent partisan, or like Shaw conceal hard thinking under verbal display. His plays have the surface and texture of carefully molded reality. And yet as a playwright he pays the price for this constructive efficiency. His plays are too severely, too nakedly architectured. He seldom gives the extra line that presents the contour of life. In Galsworthy one does not find that unnecessary grace that is the genius of the creator. His wisdom never overflows in prodigality. His plays are all necessarily good, — never unnecessarily good. His dialogue is crisp and human with all the cadences of speech. As a dramatic craftsman he stands in the first rank beside Pinero in everything but Pinero's occasional gifts of the magician. Of his characters not so much can be said. They are all ready to walk when some one breathes the breath of life into them. But they do not walk. His

mechanical and mental adequacy is the measure of Galsworthy's first position in the second rank of English playwrights. As Galsworthy proceeds as a playwright, the traits above enumerated have led to a change in his drama from a thing of men to a thing of impersonal forces.

Galsworthy avows his belief in the moral function of the play. The drama, he says, must have a spice of meaning. "Every grouping of life and character has its inherent moral; and the business of the dramatist is so to pose the group as to bring the moral poignantly to the light of day." One may argue that every grouping has its moral without agreeing that characters should be posed for their moral. Galsworthy has in several plays posed his characters, and this is the real charge against him. He may have done so in order to provide laboratory material, as in *Strife*, or in order to make a particular plea as in *Justice* and *The Mob*. All of these represent reality manipulated for the sake of the didactic or the expository motive. To this extent they represent a motive alien to truth.

The characteristics of this author are revealed at their best in his first play, *The Silver Box* (1906). In this play Galsworthy had so well mastered his art as to disguise the construction. Nothing Galsworthy has done in the theatre has equaled this play for dexterity in story telling and in infusing the moral. Two merits are notable. One is the dexterity in involving the fortunes of the two classes. The other is the ability to give an impression of the "surfaces"

of life. His grouping of events, his pregnant action, his silent spaces, his shifts of interest display the hand of a master.

Like *The Silver Box*, Galsworthy's next play, *Joy*, has a complex and realized life. It is quite without social intentions, depending upon a personal theme of unusual richness of imagination. Taking a theme that other dramatists have spoiled, the relation of a mother and daughter, — both young, — to each other and to love, Galsworthy treats it with beauty and without moral compromise.

With *Strife* (1909) Galsworthy comes to the fork of the roads. The social idealism we have spoken of continues in him. There continues too the demand for poise, for suspended judgment. But this has become now an intellectual admonition rather than an admonition of art. He is very careful not to overstate a case, not to do injustice to any side. The construction becomes diagrammatic, governed by the necessities of his review. The characters are posed with care. They bring out the moral. But they do so at the expense of the human graces. One feels that never was this group called together for any other purpose than the making of a social survey. The play is not a depiction of any one strike. It is not a depiction of strikes in general. It is a Morality on Strife.

A like criticism may be made of *Justice* (1910). The title indicates the author's purpose. He would attack the great theme of justice with the little instrument of a realistic play. One is torn between admira-

tion of the superbly achieved "surfaces" of this play, its economy of suggestion, and perplexity at its manipulated plot. It is as hard for the author to bring Falder to death as it was for Pinero to bring Zoe to death in *Mid-Channel*. But while Pinero lays no blame, Galsworthy points the accusing finger. Death comes by a medley of circumstances which no human system could stretch itself to foresee. All that was necessary to avoid the outcome was the intrusion of one man into the system. It is hard to conceive that that man would not have intruded himself. Galsworthy cannot justify such a general title as *Justice* for this play. The play should have been called *William Falder*.

The later plays of Galsworthy are marked by an increased baldness of planning, abstractness in characterization, and disparity between plot and theme. Aside from *The Pigeon*, a little fantasy on seriousmindedness in charity, and *The Little Dream*, a slight fairy play, his plays are all vehicles of messages to his time. In *The Eldest Son* (1912), *The Fugitive* (1913), *The Mob* (1914), he returns to his method of bones without flesh. *The Eldest Son* is to be compared with Houghton's *Hindle Wakes*. *The Mob* is an ugly piece of irony, as misanthropic as anything that has been written in a long time. *The Fugitive* gives us no improvement on the unhappy women of Pinero and Jones.

John Masefield has written few plays, and he is to be noticed here for only one of these and for the theory of tragedy that he outlined to accompany this play. Masefield is first a poet who discovered beauty and

faith in a body of ugliness and doubt. In *The Everlasting Mercy* and *The Widow in the Bye Street* he taught us that under the materials of realism there may lie a vision of universal truth. He would not have existed without the realists. Yet he adds to the observation of the realist the capacity for emotion of the idealist. In *The Tragedy of Nan* (1908) Masefield has harmonized the point of view of old tragedy with modern circumstance. This is one play of the new theatre that is not a little play. Nan is a majestic figure. Her tragedy glorifies her sordid fate.

"Tragedy at its best is a vision of the heart of life. The heart of life can only be laid bare in the agony and exaltation of dreadful acts. The vision of agony, of spiritual contest, pushed beyond the limits of dying personality, is exalting and cleansing. It is only by such vision that a multitude can be brought to the passionate knowledge of things exalting and eternal."

In these words Masefield gives the modern statement of the ancient theory of tragedy. Tragedy is still a matter not of its story or its struggles. It is not made tragedy by the greatness of the contest or the greatness of the fall. It is tragedy only when the concrete facts of an unhappy state are magnified to a universal and quieting significance, when they live beyond themselves in a purer ether. To the classic idea of catharsis there is added now the demand that this cleansing conduce to more knowledge of eternal things on the part of the race. Darwin has been added to Aristotle. Social morality has been added to individual morality. Tragedy must search the vision of

the heart of life in order to elevate its reality. This *The Tragedy of Nan* does. The substance of the play is one with the substance of life. But the spirit of the play elevates the substance to Tragedy.

A dignified product of the free theatre, a man who benefited from it in a certain solidity and finish of his plays, yet still failed of absolute achievement was St. John Hankin (1860–1909). Hankin combines in his art two strains. He takes the substance of the realistic and didactic play of social groups and treats it by a method derived from a study of comedy of manners. He desired to be heard as a comedian, but he lacked the nonchalance of true comedy. He was a studious Oscar Wilde. Hankin brought to the theatre a full set of theories as to playwriting gained by the study of models and inquiry into the temper of the time. He was the first among the naturalistic dramatists to treat social facts absolutely without a drag. Tradition meant to him only the means whereby he could learn to tell his story. And tradition of convention meant nothing to him either to fight or to accept. His mental machinery seems to be quite free from a personal coloring. One wonders at the adequacy of his plays without admiring them. They have wit but no comedy flavor. They tell stories of ladies and gentlemen whom we respect without desiring to meet. Perhaps no writer of the time has left so little a trace of himself in his plays.

Hankin's plays cover all kinds of topics within the circle of polite interest. Goodness and badness, the rights of women, social control, the problems of mar-

riage and business are discreetly interpreted. They touch the deeper places not at the center of the plot but at some point or points in the periphery. In *The Two Mr. Wetherbys, The Charity that Began at Home, The Last of the DeMullins, The Cassilis Engagement,* we see the scholastic method of playwriting reaching its conclusion. Hankin's comedies display all the controls of sanity and common sense. They are wary. They hang upon none of the illusions. The characters are genteel, of good breeding, emancipated or so near it that they can handle the vocabulary of the enfranchised. One finds himself wishing that some of the new illusions of sophistication might be exchanged for some of the older illusions. There are two things only that can vitalize a work of art, a faith, or a cause. The first works constructively. The second works destructively. But in the dry zone beyond belief and enthusiasm art cannot dwell.

What has been said for Hankin may also apply to Stanley Houghton (1881–1914). Extravagantly hailed for a time, the perspective of months is enough to place him as little more than a competent workman. Houghton is a Hankin without comedy. Belonging to the Midland group of writers, his work lacks the refinements of manners. *Hindle Wakes* organizes the "new morality", or unmorality, into a technical code. The right to joy is no longer a burning issue. It is a presumption. Far more real than Galsworthy's *The Eldest Son,* it reflects in the temper of the play itself the flattening of moral intensity. It is well done in that it is laconic and commonplace.

But it is a perfect example of the "little play." It is neither ugly nor beautiful. The play represents the step beyond which it is impossible to go in art, in that it introduces whim and pleasure as guides in the great decisions of life. Without calling upon passion or jealousy or the demand for self-realization, it shows a slangy youngster having "her little fancy." The story of such a play could be told in ten words as well as in three acts.

Set apart from other writers of the free theatre by a finished artistry and a resolute morality is Granville Barker (1877–). As moral as Galsworthy, Barker excels the latter in a searching artistry, in making excursions into new zones of the spirit. Indeed, it may be said that Barker is the only man in England who, using the methods of close naturalism, has pressed forward the boundaries of art. Barker is like Shaw in liking discussion, in feeling that ideas are among the most important things in the world. But he is unlike Shaw in being an artist. Aside from his gift of a quick and understanding mind, Barker's chief virtue lies in his skill as a designer. His plots are all beautifully planned and etched. No one has equaled him for the ability to apply the principles of the abstruse arts of painting and music to the making of a play of ideas. The skill he shows in providing new mediums of expression in the production of plays has served him in the handling of his own themes. His plays are models of form built of elements articulated like a symphony.

All this artistry Barker applies to a substance not unlike Shaw's. He takes as his themes the topics

of intellectualism, the social, political, or sex interests of men and women. But he treats the mental lives of men and women at their purest and best. He selects those moments which are beyond speech, which lie in the region of the veiled suggestion, the broken meaning. He is like Shaw in that his characters live in their minds and the play is made of mental emanations. He is unlike Shaw in that he makes room for only the salient thought, the revealing symbol. The result of these things is a certain silhouette quality in Barker's characters, a lack of vitality in his treatment of themes. His themes are among the most vital on earth, but he treats them in a vacuum. He makes no appeal to mood as detached from thought, as does Tchekhov. His plays are like reminiscences of passionate things after emotion has cooled, or they are aloof and cynical.

Barker started his career at twenty-two with one of his most interesting plays, *The Marrying of Ann Leete.* Here was a play with barely a sentence of narrative. Hardly one speech made definite reply to the last. All was as disjointed as the conversation of a well-bred group overheard from a balcony. The play is a nocturne, opening with voices joined in scattered speech in the dark. In this fashion the whole play builds itself up by divination. And yet there is in it a profound grouping of characters. Best of these is Ann, a daughter of the nineteenth century, who determines that she will not sell herself to keep alive a system that is moribund. She will use her healthy young life in a conscious devotion, an offering to the cause of a

healthy world. There are scenes of surpassing poignancy in the work. The scene in which the knowledge of sex comes to Ann as a thing to be faced and not to be ashamed of, and the scene in which having made her decision to marry the gardener the two stand in the cottage and listen for the call of their children, measure high in English drama.

Barker has always held to the moral imperatives of character, as these are applied to the new problems of the world. In two plays of solid workmanship he studies the expressions of these imperatives as they apply to modern business and to matters of sex. The first, *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905), is a study of the many-sided face of honor. As a study of the family and the power of money to sap the conscience the play is to be compared with Pinero's *The Thunderbolt*, which it precedes. It is the best English comedy of business, though theatrically not the equal of Pinero's play. *Waste* is a realistic tragedy lived in the zones of the mind. The moral of the play is not that sex is waste, but that we have not yet functioned to sex.

The Madras House (1910) is the climax of Barker's symphonic method. The play covers in good-natured speech the problem he touched in the tragedy of *Waste*. In his effort to represent the "woman" question fairly Barker gives an idealized cross-section of society in such a way as to show it to be not a woman question but a human question. He shows many groups of women against a background of modern business. The first is the group of the Huxtable sisters, a cluster of grapes hanging on the family vine, waiting

to be plucked. The next class is composed of those who live in the barracks of industry. These are shown to be of both sexes. The third broad class of women is represented by the manikins who display costumes in the establishment of The Madras House. This group politely represents that class of women who live by their sex. Other women are shown, — Miss Yates who follows her impulses, Mrs. Brigstock who marries on insufficient income, Mrs. Constantine Madras, a "discarded" and complaining woman, Miss Chancellor, a demon of Virtue, and last Jessica — "the most wonderful achievement of civilization, and worth the cost of her breeding, worth the toil and the helotage of — all the others." Different kinds of men are shown as well, from Tommy, the "mean sensual man", through E. P. State, the romanticist, and Philip, the monk of the intellect, to the haughty Mohammedanism of Constantine. Nothing more is needed than this list of characters to show the theme of the play. Plot there is none. It was the author's purpose to show a mental epitome of modern society. The result is a fabric of remarkable compression and suggestiveness. The play often rises to comedy and, at the end, in the well-bred but sincere speech of Philip and Jessica, achieves beauty.

In addition to these works Barker has adapted Schnitzler's *Anatol* into English and aided Laurence Housman in the composition of *Prunella*. The artistry of intellectualism will hardly go beyond Barker. He has sensitiveness, restraint, knowledge of the soul of the time, and remarkable mastery of design. His

plays have that most difficult thing, idea vitalized with sensation. But he has refined this type to sterility.

The work of other men and women can only be touched. Much of it has come from the provinces, standing, with the Irish plays, as the effective dramatization of little themes for selected audiences. Elizabeth Baker's *Chains* (Duke of York's, 1909) is a very adroit study of the forces that make up middle-class life. The story is not drawn to a focus, there is no plot, but the pressure of events on narrow lives has seldom been better presented.

Githa Sowerby's *Rutherford and Son* (Court Theatre, 1912) has a little of the Norwegian note of gloom. It deals with a middle-class business family in a story involving business honor and with the strong note of *Strife*. Charles McEvoy's *David Ballard* (Manchester, 1907) is a realistic melodrama in a domestic circle. To a like class belong some careful studies by Gilbert Cannan and S. M. Fox.

From Wales there came in 1913 *Change* by J. O. Francis, a study of the struggles of fathers and sons in primitive environment. Of a comedy order is Moffat's *Bunty Pulls the Strings* (1911) that came from Scotland to the Playhouse and was then transferred for a successful run to the Haymarket. Harold Chapin of the Manchester Theatre had to his credit several promising light plays when he gave up his life fighting before Loos. All these writers display the qualities suggested at the opening of this chapter. By 1914 the writers for the English minority theatres had reached the point at which they were waiting for the next stage.

CHAPTER XII

The Challenge of the Future

In this book we have sketched the history of the English stage from the accession of Queen Victoria to the beginning of the Great War. We have seen how the solving of the problems of one period has led into the problems of the following period. No movement has come to full consummation. The promised golden age has each time receded into the distance. Each period has considered itself a time of preparation for greater dignities that were to come. And each period has provided its own quota of success and of failure.

These facts have something to do with the critical attitude we have had to take in this book. No time in the whole period of our study has failed to bring some workers who demand praise. And few institutions even of the later periods of resolute standards can escape altogether from censure. We have seen that the minority theatre has so trained itself down as almost to lack stamina. Common sense tells us that for the next step we must look again to popular art. And so the period ends as others have done in that doubt which is Life.

As we have surveyed the history of the English theatre for fourscore years we have found that good work does not come in clusters. It has not depended upon groups. Amid much work that has been merely acceptable or has been adversely criticized several works have received what may seem extravagant praise. These are the works upon which the mind of the critic rests with satisfaction. By no means all of a type, most of these works have been in the class of imagination and comedy. Little has been said for the "well-made" play, the realistic play, or for the Englishman's attempts to put high meaning into tradesman's tragedy. On the other hand, such popular forms as farce, melodrama, and comic opera have been gladly accepted. A few works have stood out once and for all. Browning's *Strafford* and *Colombe's Birthday;* Robertson's *Caste;* the lyric comedies of Gilbert; Pinero's *Trelawney of the "Wells", The Gay Lord Quex, The Thunderbolt;* two acts of Jones's *The Masqueraders;* Shaw's *Candida, Man and Superman, Androcles and the Lion;* all of Synge's plays except *Deirdre;* Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire;* Barker's *The Marrying of Ann Leete;* Masefield's *The Tragedy of Nan;* Galsworthy's *The Silver Box;* Barrie's *Peter Pan* and *The Admirable Crichton,* — these are a few that live in the memory. Many plays have received very serious consideration, in that the authors have made worthy efforts to contribute to the wisdom of the age. Strangely enough many of these sink down to minor positions. It is the work that has some magic in it that is remembered.

In spite of the good work that has been done for a

generation in the minority playhouses, the English theatre of to-day presents a face of doubt. The activities of the drama of experiment have limited themselves to a narrow road. Outside this the great field of popular amusement has grown broader. Never had the theatre expanded as during these years. The number of music halls, cinematograph halls, variety halls and popular theatres has risen enormously. And never has the current of ordinary English drama been less distinguished. If we except the movements represented by the printed play, the drama of London and the provinces seems to have deteriorated rather than improved in quality in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century.

The plays of the popular theatres have been greatly influenced by the themes of the plays of the repertory theatres. This influence has not been always favorable. A certain daring in the treatment of serious problems in the book plays has been exploited into an appeal to illicit interests. The methods of the realistic and purpose play have been copied without sincerity. Sex problems, problems of disease, of eugenics, of political and social reform have become a stock in trade. And when people turn from these plays they turn to entertainment of the lightest nature, to naughty farces and musical comedy of frocks and frills. The French play is almost completely extinguished, but the old-fashioned melodrama continues as a relic at Drury Lane. And in late years the vulgar "American" comedy has come in for increasing vogue.

In the professional theatre of the first class there is

no deterioration. But it is maintaining its position with increasing difficulty. Mr. Frederick Harrison stands, as did the late George Alexander and Herbert Tree, for high standards and good plays. They have called to their aid a group of enterprising and capable craftsmen. Their theatres continue the traditions of the comedy of manners of the nineties, with now and then a play from Shakespeare, an old English comedy, a new situation play, or more rarely a genteel problem play. To these theatres Pinero, Jones, Esmond, Carton, Chambers have now and then made contribution. To these writers there have been added in the new century a few who continue their traditions. Alfred Sutro adds to the methods of the comedy of manners a pointed interest in social issues. Reared as translator in the school of symbolism, he goes back as writer to the patterns of the eighties. He is much given to strong and silent men, to exposés of the rottenness of the world of fashion. His *The Walls of Jericho*, a hollow thing, was warmly received on its first appearance in 1904. *John Glayde's Honor* is no better. It is pompous, a fabric of priggish attitudes. Sutro is also the author of a series of artificial comedies.

Somerset Maugham is better than Sutro because he does not try to be so lofty. His plays are bits of farce exquisitely handled to bring out the graces and frivolities of society. Maugham makes no pretense to throw light on life. He is content if he can tell a story with proper taste. The best that can be said of him is that now and then he shows some of the playful fancy of Barrie. Here and there he achieves a true piece

of observation, a note of pathos, a discovery in human equations. As he proceeds he shows a development in seriousness, an intention to be something more than a graceful entertainer. His list of plays includes *A Man of Honour* (1903), *Lady Frederick* (1907), *Jack Straw, Mrs. Dot* (1908), *The Land of Promise* (1914).

Higher than either of these must be placed Hubert Henry Davies. The author of very few plays, he is the creator of solid comedy. He is that most unusual thing in the theatre, a writer of scholarly mind who conceals resolute thinking under flexible artistry. Davies has a high ideal of his work. He ponders long on a play and when he presents it one may be sure of a theme that is a contribution in social psychology and a treatment that bears the most careful scrutiny. His men and women are flesh and blood, they speak a conceivable language. His first play, *Cousin Kate,* is a quaint romance of few characters and deft workmanship; *Lady Gorringe's Necklace* is a situation comedy. His best comedy is *The Mollusc,* a remarkable study of the character of a woman. *Outcast* broaches a serious problem and rather patently avoids its consequences.

The modern English theatre both in its popular and experimental branches takes its stand on comedy. Comedy represents the genius of the English people. The French have their *genre sérieux* and vaudeville, the Germans have the passion for reality and mysticism, but the English have intellectual comedy. This is the front the English theatre is proud to put to the

world. The list of English writers of comedy in the last thirty years is an impressive one. Gilbert, Pinero, Jones, Wilde, Shaw, Esmond, Chambers, Carton, Hankin, Barker, Maugham, Davies, and the dramatists of Ireland have enriched the world with examples of the comic spirit.

We have seen that cold intellectualism brings the dramatic impulse to a standstill. The scientific method in the serious play became bald didacticism or bad psychology. But curbed by the comic spirit, the theatre has given us some of the corrective agencies of modern thinking. One of the best expressions of the scientific method as applied to serious themes is the method of fantasy, into which form realism has been breaking up. As realism could not turn soft and sweet it distorted itself. It stretched out the predominant lines, it set askew the angles. It put laughter instead of smiles and smiles instead of tears. What English drama must do, says Filon, is to create a form which will represent the dualism of British character. Pure idealism and pure realism are impossible. The answer is given in the fantastic, in which form some of the best work of the modern English theatre has been done. The nineties were fantastic. Gilbert and Pinero discovered their best in fancy. Meredith and Butler and Shaw grapple with a dualism that Matthew Arnold understood but could not express. And in Barrie fantasy achieves its height.

The man who transplanted fantasy to its home in the British Isles, who made it speak English (slightly tinged here and there with Scotch), is J. M. Barrie. In a time

in which revolt itself had become something of a convention, Barrie has been distinguished by standing apart from the protestants. His career itself is a perfect expression of the canny sense that Meredith ascribes to comedy and that goes with Scotch character. Barrie is no reformer, no joiner of new groups. He came to the theatre only after he had made a success as a novelist. But unlike other men of the time he has been unwilling to confuse the issues of the theatre and the printed play. Only lately has he begun to issue his plays in printed form, and these his lesser pieces, or plays in such expensive editions as to gain little currency. As a dramatist he has been strictly a writer for the practical theatre. He has refused to surrender to the literary convention. His plays are written for production only. More than any dramatist since Boucicault, his plays consist of instructions to actors and producer, of effects of pure action. He follows the rule, "no speech if action will do; no action if silence will do." In associations Barrie has connected himself with the older professional organization. He did not hesitate to put himself into the hands of the chief business man of the English-speaking theatre, Charles Frohman.

Barrie is no believer in the theory of art through hard work. By the super-serious he is often called facile, and in these times this is a reproach. But Barrie's facility is but the quality of his real grace as a dramatist. Barrie has more intuition into character than any other English playwright. There is a spiritual intimacy in his work that no one else can show.

This is the source of his charm and his understanding of charm. It is the source also of what some call his "trickiness", his "April-weather" style, his fashion of combined sentiment and laughter. Certainly this is the source of his joy in his work. No artist in letters in our time is more gleeful in labors than Barrie. He has managed to keep the joy of work in an anxious time, to follow fancy while other men were following reason.

Barrie has been called a reactionary. In opinions such he undoubtedly is. He has steadfastly refused to indulge in -isms and petrified ideas. He puts forth no formulated disquisitions on human problems. His chief interest is in character, but in his understanding of character he is even profound. He has made it his business to open up new nooks, to probe the whimsical pockets of the natures of men and women. He refuses to look upon men and women as mere thought-machines. His themes are those of sentiment and mood and intuition. Sometimes there is a little feminine "notion" that he expounds. And he creates his impressions by the most economical means. If he is speaking of charm he gets charm. Because of his gifts he is particularly apt in dealing with women, not as subjects of vivisection, or as exponents of the human unrest, but as the sisters of gentleness. And he knows how to deal with children. And when one comes to think of it, he knows how to deal with men quite as well. Some of his best characters are "just men."

The secret of Barrie, if one can get at it, does not lie in any specialty of his in the treatment of women or

children. It lies in his ability completely to assimilate the materials of understanding and of art. He is the true man of genius in the simplicity of his processes. On this Max Beerbohm has said the best thing. "The man of genius is that rare creature in whom imagination, not ousted by logic, in full growth, abides uncramped, in unison with full-grown logic." And he says Barrie is "a child who can express through an artistic medium the childishness that is in him."

The last few years have seen several uses of the child medium in art. The child medium has come as the best vestibule to the house of mystery that our skeptical times will admit. The child literature of the last few years is something far more than literature for children. It is literature for grown-up men. We were first convinced of this in the astonishing wisdom of *Alice in Wonderland.* Kipling used children in *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies* in a very profound research. In Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird* the childish imagination is used only as a lens through which older ones look. And Barrie has excelled all of them in *Peter Pan,* the boy who wouldn't grow up. He "has stripped off from himself the last flimsy remnants of a pretense to maturity." *Peter Pan* is the supreme achievement in imagination of the modern English theatre.

Barrie's plays are based on wisps of sentiment, of opinion, and of character. He took sides on Ibsen as early as 1891 in an unsuccessful little play entitled *Ibsen's Ghost. The Professor's Love Story* (1895) and *The Little Minister* (1897) are fanciful treatments of

romance in which Barrie's understanding of quaint character is shown. In *Quality Street* (1903) and *Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire* (1905) we have Barrie's April-weather manner, a strange combination of sentiment and anti-sentiment. *Quality Street* is a story of a girl without girlhood. *Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire* is the story of a woman who has lost her girlhood. Neither is true. Both are effusions of literature, the spinning of a mood, but Barrie's skill has saved at least the first. *Little Mary* is one of Barrie's most delightful whimsies, but not even his art could give substance on the stage to the idea on which it is based. Two of Barrie's plays, *The Admirable Crichton* (1903) and *What Every Woman Knows* (1908) are based on broader foundations than his usual plays. These still relate to subtly discovered traits in human nature, but they have a more general significance than his studies of individuals. Max Beerbohm calls *The Admirable Crichton* "the best thing that has happened in my time to the British stage." It is a study of the constitution of society, a reference of it back to first principles, with the conclusion that "whatever is, is right." The manner by which the test is made is ingenious and dramatic. No more delightfully representative characters can be imagined than the group of aristocrats and servants who make up its cast. The love passages of Lady Mary and Crichton have magic in them. The play is so well done that its logic cannot be escaped. *What Every Woman Knows* goes back to Barrie's specialty, the handling of the minds of women. A beautiful play with some excellent characters, it is

more bald in planning than any other of the author's works. In stating the case for Maggie, Barrie permits himself a plea for a particular woman rather than "every woman." It is only in a little partisanship for women as against the selfishness of men that Barrie permits his art to slip. He does this again in the egregious character of the husband in *The Twelve Pound Look*. *The Legend of Leonora* is a riot of gleeful fancy, perversely placed in realistic surroundings. Barrie is not a man to be depended upon to do the expected thing. *Old Friends* is as intense as Ibsen, and in *Pantaloon* he has given us a rather vaguely dramatized version of a Harlequin theme.

The tendency toward fantasy found in Barrie has been taken up by other writers. It was supported in England by a neo-romantic tendency in the theatre of Europe. In Rostand's romance there had been much of the playful element. From Italy, the home of the Harlequinade, there had come some influence. When fancy began to stir again on English soil some of it sought out the materials so long popular in the Christmas pantomimes and began to introduce the clowns and the jesters of the Harlequinade. In Barrie's *Pantaloon* the heart of the old man is uncovered by the coming of a grandchild. The most charming play of this type is Laurence Housman's *Prunella*, produced at the Court Theatre. There now comes a tendency to elevate the fantastic into a code of playwriting and to adapt to it systems of production. The reaction from real things is expressed partly in return to a playful treatment of old formulas.

Old stories are told with a new flavor, written either in playful verse or in flexible prose.

Imagination was further freed by the coming of Oriental motives. Japan had been an influence in English art since 1880. In 1903 a Japanese company played in London. The influence of the Russian Ballet, of Max Reinhardt's productions in Berlin, brought an interest in the more garish coloring and more elemental themes of Persia and Arabia. New systems of staging and production based upon the ideas of Gordon Craig, of Bakst, of Reinhardt, began to arrive. There developed a new artist of the stage, the Decorator, more than the maker of sets and perspectives, the creator of *inscenierung*. In England Granville Barker was the patron of these artists. Mr. Albert Rothenstein and Mr. Norman Wilkinson and, above all, Gordon Craig, have been busy creating new effects. About 1911 the vogue of the picturesque and sensational began on the English stage. Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird* and Barrie's *Peter Pan*, Reinhardt's *The Miracle* and *Sumurun*, and the Russian Ballet at Covent Garden awoke England to new ideas of stage beauty.

Some of these depended upon alien motives. But they began to exert an immediate influence on playwrights. Galsworthy writes *The Pigeon* and *The Little Dream;* Shaw writes *Fanny's First Play* and *Androcles and the Lion*, Masefield writes *The Faithful* on a Japanese theme. Other dramatists appear who have had no connection with the older movements of realism. Rudolf Besier's *Don* (1909) had been a deli-

cate study of Quixotism, something of a forerunner for *The Pigeon* but more dainty of mood; his *Lady Patricia* (1911) is a delightful satire on preciosity. Edward Knoblauch's *The Cottage in the Air* (1909) a flimsy bit, and his next play, *Kismet,* a riot of sensation, both belong to England though the author was born an American. In Lord Dunsany's *The Gods of the Mountain* and other plays we are transplanted to a no-man's land of imagination.

The man who had been responsible for this change in stage theory, or at least its prophet, was Gordon Craig. After fifteen years of public endeavor Craig's work is still "a challenge of the future." Enough of his ideas have already been accepted to show how vital they were, how instinct with creation under their destructiveness. Craig's first stand is for the destruction of the theatre. "To save the theatre, the theatre must be destroyed", he quotes from Eleanora Duse. He begins his planning for the theatre of the future with no impeding traditions. He dismisses machinery, perspective scenery, and actors from his theatre. Believing that two men have spoiled the theatre, the realist and the machinist, Craig seeks to return the theatre to an expression of the immensities of the spiritual world.

Why cannot the theatre at present reflect these immensities? Aside from the fact that it is mechanical and imitative, it is governed by emotion and chance. Alone among the arts its effects are those of random inspiration. Craig would introduce into the theatre the absolute standards of the other arts. He would

make its method that of emotion controlled by intellect. He takes as a text Flaubert's words: "The artist should be in his work like God in creation, invisible and all powerful; he should be felt everywhere and seen nowhere. Art should be raised above personal affection and nervous susceptibility. It is time to give it the perfection of the physical sciences by means of a pitiless method." These ideas Craig has applied to the theatre. In a search for a sure and pitiless method he has expelled from his theory of the theatre the human actor and all color of personal emotion.

Evocation of the imagination is Craig's aim in art. But he wishes to make the principles of this evocation certain and fixed. He believes that the best use of the formula of the art lies not in itself but in its ability to awaken imagination. The formula has no value in itself. It secures value only as amended in the imagination of the beholder. For this purpose a puppet will do as well as a human actor, nay better, because there will be no intruding personality, no variation of mood.

That fixed and unchanging principle which Craig finds in the puppet he seeks also in the production as a whole. He finds this in the application to the production of the principles of design. Design, the factors of sight and mass, supply for Craig a new medium of a fixed and exact quality. There are few traditional elements in this medium save as these are derived from certain suggestions of race ceremonial, the lines of architecture and of ornament. Most of the factors of this medium are derived from the new

discoveries in the values of light and color, and the recent recognition of dramatic suggestion in designs, in color arrangements, in draperies, and masses.

Craig goes further in his reaction against rationalism than any other artist. His theories are not, in his opinion, theories for the few. They depend upon the instinctive response of men in groups to appeals of purely sensuous nature. In his ideal the theatre is a place of the many in which the reactions of men are purified by response to a fine and clean medium. For the purpose of an appeal to the mass imagination he has invented the "über-marionette", a large figure to serve as an instrument of dramatic imagination. Craig has gone further than any other artist of the theatre in incorporating into drama the potentialities of other arts. So strongly do the designer, the musician, and the dancer enter into his scheme that drama seems to become an art of the arts.

Appropriately enough, Craig's chief significance lies in his stimulation of thought rather than in his deeds. His revolutionary ideas are subjecting the theatre of commerce to a rigorous test, and there are many signs that his influence is being felt. Most of the fresh achievements in staging of Max Reinhardt and Granville Barker are to be referred to his theories. He began his career as a producer in London in March, 1902, by presenting at the Great Queen Street Theatre Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, and Purcell's *Masque of Love*. These productions are significant of his later ideas through the fact that his production was an "arrangement" of figures and shadows on a one-color

background unbroken by flies. Craig has designed productions for several of Shakespeare's plays, only a few of which he has been able to render. His chief work has been done at his school in Florence, Italy, and through the columns of his magazine *The Mask*.

With Craig our study of the modern English theatre ends on a note of speculation not unmixed with promise. Since 1914 the theatre of England has been standing still awaiting the turn of events.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

A selected list of plays written by English dramatists from the freeing of the theatres to the beginning of the Great War.

Dates at left refer to first production. Dates at right refer to first publication. In cases where the play appeared undated in a series of stage plays, reference is made to the name of the publisher and the number of the play in the series. The chief series were as follows:

CUMBERLAND, J. British Theatre. London, 1829 *ff.*
Minor Theatre. London, 1828 *ff.*

DICKS, J. Standard Plays. London, 1883 *ff.*

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HILSENBERG, L. The Modern English Comic Theatre. London, 1843 *ff.*

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LIST OF PLAYS

À BECKETT, GILBERT ABBOTT (1811–1856) and LEMON, MARK (1809–1870)

1844. Don César de Bazan. Adapted from French of Dumanoir and Dennery. London, 1844.

ALBERY, JAMES (1838–1889)

1870. Two Roses. London, 1870.
1873. Oriana.
1877. Pink Dominoes. From Hennequin and Delacour.

BAKER, ELIZABETH

1909. Chains. London, 1911.

BARKER, HARLEY GRANVILLE (1877–)

1902. The Marrying of Ann Leete.
1905. The Voysey Inheritance.
1907. Waste.
In Three Plays. London, 1909.
1910. The Madras House. London, 1911.

BARKER, H. G. and HOUSMAN, LAURENCE (1867–)

1904. Prunella. London, 1906.

BARRIE, SIR JAMES MATTHEW (1860–)

1892. Walker, London. S. French.
1895. The Professor's Love Story.
1897. The Little Minister.
1900. The Wedding Guest. *Fortnightly Review*, 1900.
1903. Quality Street. London, 1914.
1903. The Admirable Crichton. London, 1914.
1903. Little Mary.
1904. Peter Pan.
1905. Alice-Sit-By-the-Fire.
1905. Pantaloon. London, 1914.
1908. What Every Woman Knows.
1910. Old Friends. London, 1910.
1910. The Twelve Pound Look. London, 1914.
1912. Rosalind. London, 1914.
1914. The Will. London, 1914.
1914. The Legend of Leonora.

1914. "Der Tag"; or, The Tragic Man. London, 1914.
1916. A Kiss for Cinderella.

BENNETT, ARNOLD (1867–)

Cupid and Commonsense. London, 1909.
1909. What the Public Wants. London, 1909.
1911. The Honeymoon. London, 1911.
1913. The Great Adventure. London, 1913.

BENNETT, A. and KNOBLAUCH, E. (1874–)

1912. Milestones. London, 1912.

BERNARD, WILLIAM BAYLE (1807–1875).

1832. Rip Van Winkle. Lacy.
1833. The Nervous Man. Lacy.
1836. The Man About Town. Lacy.

BESIER, RUDOLPH (1878–)

1909. Don. London, 1910.
1909. Olive Latimer's Husband. London, 1909.
1911. Lady Patricia. London, 1911.

BOUCICAULT, DION L. (1820?–1890)

1841. London Assurance. London, 1844.
1844. Old Heads and Young Hearts. Webster (13).
1852. The Corsican Brothers. Founded on a dramatization of Dumas's *Les Frères Corses*, by Grangé and Xavier de Montépin.
1854. Louis XI.
1860. The Colleen Bawn; or, The Brides of Garryowen. Founded on Gerald Griffin's novel *The Collegian*. Lacy (63).
1861. The Octoroon. Lacy (65).
1862. Jessie Brown; or, The Relief of Lucknow. Lacy (38).
1864. The Streets of London.
1865. Arrah-na-Pogue. London, 1865.

1868. After Dark; or, a Tale of London Life.
1874. Led Astray.
1875. The Shaughraun. Lacy (123).

BOUCICAULT, DION L. and READE, CHARLES.
1868. Foul Play. London, 1868.

BRIGHOUSE, HAROLD.
1911. The Odd Man Out. London, 1912.
1913. Garside's Career. London, 1914.
1914. Hobson's Choice. New York, 1916.

BROUGHAM, JOHN (1810–1880).
1863. The Duke's Motto. From Paul Feval's *Le Bossu.*

BROWNING, ROBERT (1812–1889)
1837. Strafford. London, 1837.
King Victor and King Charles. London, 1842.
The Return of the Druses. London, 1843.
1843. A Blot in the 'Scutcheon. London, 1843.
1853. Colombe's Birthday. London, 1844.
1884. In a Balcony. London, 1853.

BUCHANAN, ROBERT (1841–1901)
1880. A Nine Days' Queen.
1881. The Shadow of the Sword. Dramatized from his own novel of the same name.
1883. Storm Beaten. Dramatized from his novel *God and the Man.*
1883. Lady Clare. From G. Ohnet's *Le Maître de Forges.*
1886. Sophia. Dramatization of Fielding's *Tom Jones.*
1888. Joseph's Sweetheart. Dramatization of Fielding's *Joseph Andrews.*
1890. Clarissa Harlowe. Dramatization of Richardson's *History of Clarissa Harlowe.*

1890. Miss Tomboy. Adaptation of Vanbrugh's *The Relapse.*

1890. The Sixth Commandment. From Dostoievski's *Crime and Punishment.*

1894. The Charlatan.

BUCHANAN, ROBERT W. and JAY, HARRIETT.

1884. Alone in London.

BUCKSTONE, JOHN BALDWIN (1802–1879).

1828. Luke the Laborer.

1835. The Dream at Sea.

BULWER-LYTTON, EDWARD GEORGE EARLE LYTTON (1803–1873).

1837. The Duchess de la Vallière. London, 1837.

1838. The Lady of Lyons. London, 1838.

1839. Richelieu; or, The Conspiracy. London, 1839.

1840. Money. London, 1840.

The Dramatic Works of Sir Edward Lytton-Bulwer. London, 1841.

BYRON, H. J. (1834–1884)

1868. Cyril's Success. Lacy (89).

1873. La Fille de Madame Angot. From Siraudin and Clairville.

1875. Our Boys. Lacy (116).

1876. Wrinkles. French (115).

1878. A Fool and his Money.

CANNAN, GILBERT (1884–)

1910. Miles Dixon. London, 1914.

1911. James and John. London, 1914.

CARTON, RICHARD CLAUDE (R. D. Critchett) (1856–

1890. Sunlight and Shadow. S. French.

1895. The Home Secretary.

1898. Lord and Lady Algy.

1909. Lorrimer Sabiston, Dramatist.

CARTON, R. C. and RALEIGH, C.

1885. The Great Pink Pearl.

CHAMBERS, CHARLES HADDON (1860–)

1888. Captain Swift. London, 1902.
1894. John a' Dreams.
1899. The Tyranny of Tears. London, 1902.
1909. Sir Anthony. London, 1909.
1911. Passers-by. London, 1913.
1913. Tante.

CHAPIN, HAROLD (1886–1916)

1914. Augustus in Search of a Father. 1915.
1915. It's the Poor that Helps the Poor. 1915.
1915. The Dumb and the Blind. 1915.

COLLINS, WILKIE (1824–1889) and DICKENS, CHARLES (1812–1870).

1867. No Thoroughfare.

COLLINS, W. and FECHTER, CHARLES (1824–1879).

1869. Black and White.

DAVIDSON, JOHN (1857–1909).

Bruce. London, 1886.
Smith; a Tragic Farce. London, 1888.
Scaramouch in Naxos. London, 1889.
1905. For the Crown. From Coppée's *Pour la Couronne*. London, 1905.
Self's the Man. London, 1901.
The Knight of the Maypole. London, 1902.
The Theatrocrat. London, 1909.

DAVIES, HUBERT HENRY (1876–)

1903. Cousin Kate. Boston, 1910.
1903. Mrs. Gorringe's Necklace. Boston, 1910.
1907. The Mollusc. London, 1914.
1910. A Single Man. London, 1914.

1914. Outcast.
1914. Lady Epping's Lawsuit. London, 1914.

Dean, Basil.
1910. Effie.

Down, Oliphant.
1914. The Maker of Dreams. London, 1914.

Drinkwater, John.
1914. Rebellion. London, 1914.

Du Maurier, Guy.
1909. An Englishman's Home. London, 1909.

Esmond, Henry V. (1869–)
1899. Grierson's Way.
1901. When We Were Twenty-one. S. French.

Fagan, James Bernard (1874–)
1904. The Prayer of the Sword.
1909. The Earth. London, 1913.

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1833. Jonathan Bradford; or, The Murder at the Roadside Inn. Duncombe.
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1913. The Waters of Bitterness. London, 1912.
1913. This Generation. London, 1913.

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1913. Change. London, 1914.

Galsworthy, John (1867–
1906. The Silver Box.
1907. Joy.
1909. Strife.
Plays: The Silver Box; Joy; Strife. London, 1909.
1910. Justice. London, 1910.

1912. The Little Dream. London, 1911.
1912. The Eldest Son. London, 1912.
1912. The Pigeon. London, 1912.
1913. The Fugitive. London, 1913.
1914. The Mob. London, 1914.

GIBSON, WILLIAM WILFRED.

Daily Bread. London, 1912.
Womenkind. London, 1912.

GILBERT, WILLIAM SCHWENCK (1835–1911)

1870. The Princess. From Tennyson's *The Princess*. Lacy (87).
1870. The Palace of Truth. From Mme. de Genlis's *Le Palais de la Vérite*. Lacy (89).
1871. Pygmalion and Galatea. Lacy (103).
1873. The Wicked World. London, 1873.
1874. Charity. Lacy (123).
1874. Sweethearts. Lacy (111).
1875. Tom Cobb; or, Fortune's Toy. Lacy (117).
1875. Broken Hearts. Lacy (118).
1875. Trial by Jury. London, 1878.
1876. Dan'l Druce.
1877. Engaged. Lacy (117).
1877. The Sorcerer. London, 1878.
1878. H. M. S. Pinafore; or, The Lass That Loved a Sailor. London, 1878.
1879. The Pirates of Penzance; or, The Slave of Duty. London, 1887.
1881. Patience; or, Bunthorne's Bride! London, 1881.
1882. Iolanthe; or, The Peer and the Peri. London, 1885.
1884. Princess Ida; or, The Castle Adamant. London, 1884.

1884. Comedy and Tragedy.
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1887. Ruddigore; or, The Witch's Curse. London, 1887.
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GRUNDY, SYDNEY (1848–1915)

1877. Mammon. From Feuillet's *Montjoye*.
1879. The Snowball. S. French (131), 1893.
1880. In Honour Bound. Suggested by Scribe's comedy *Une Chaîne*. S. French (123), 1885.
1882. The Novel Reader. From Meilhac and Halévy, *La Petite Marquise*.
1883. The Glass of Fashion. French (142), 1899.

A Pair of Spectacles. From *Les Petits Oiseaux*, Labiche and Delacour. S. French (142), 1899.

1887. The Arabian Nights. Founded on the German of Von Moser. S. French (134).
1889. A Fool's Paradise. S. French (142), 1899. (The Mouse Trap.)
1893. Sowing the Wind. S. French (142).

1894. An Old Jew.
1894. A Bunch of Violets. From Feuillet's *Montjoye.*
1895. The Greatest of These.
1905. Business is Business. From French of Octave Mirbeau.

HAMILTON, COSMO.
1913. The Blindness of Virtue. London, 1913.

HANKIN, ST. JOHN (1860–1909).
1903. The Two Mr. Wetherbys.
1905. The Return of the Prodigal.
1906. The Charity that Began at Home.
1907. The Cassilis Engagement.
1908. The Last of the De Mullins.
Dramatic Works of St. John Hankin, with Introduction by John Drinkwater. London, 1912.

HASTINGS, BASIL MACDONALD (1881–
1912. The New Sin. London, 1912.

HOBBES, JOHN OLIVER (PEARL MARIA TERESA CRAIGIE) (1867–1906)
1898. The Ambassador. London, 1898.
1900. The Wisdom of the Wise. London, 1900.

HOPE, ANTHONY (HAWKINS) (1863–)
1898. The Adventure of Lady Ursula. New York, 1899.

HORNE, RICHARD HENRY (1803–1884)
The Death of Marlowe. London, 1837.

HOUGHTON, STANLEY (1881–1914)
1910. The Younger Generation. London, 1910.
1912. Hindle Wakes. London, 1912.
Works of Stanley Houghton. London, 1914.

JEROME, JEROME KLAPKA (1859–)

1900. Miss Hobbs. S. French.
1907. The Passing of the Third Floor Back. London, 1907.
1911. The Master of Mrs. Chilvers.

JERROLD, DOUGLAS (1803–1857)

1829. Black-Eyed Susan; or, "All in the Downs." Duncombe (4).
1832. The Rent Day. London, 1832.

JONES, HENRY ARTHUR (1851–)

1882. The Silver King. New York, 1907.
1884. Saints and Sinners. London, 1891.
1889. The Middleman. New York, 1907.
1890. Judah. London, 1894.
1891. The Dancing Girl. New York, 1907.
1891. The Crusaders. London, 1893.
1893. The Tempter. London, 1898.
1894. The Masqueraders. London, 1894.
1894. The Case of Rebellious Susan. London, 1894.
1895. The Triumph of the Philistines. London, 1899.
1896. Michael and His Lost Angel. London, 1896.
1896. The Rogue's Comedy. London, 1898.
1897. The Liars. London, 1901.
1898. The Manœuvres of Jane. London, 1904.
1899. Carnac Sahib. London, 1899.
1900. The Lackey's Carnival. London, 1900.
1900. Mrs. Dane's Defence. London, 1905.
1903. Whitewashing Julia. London, 1905.
1904. Joseph Entangled. New York, 1906.
1906. The Hypocrites. New York, 1908.
1908. Dolly Reforming Herself. London, 1908.
1910. We Can't Be as Bad as All That. New York, 1910.

1913. The Divine Gift. London, 1913.
1913. Mary Goes First. London, 1913.
1915. The Lie. New York, 1915.

KNOWLES, JAMES SHERIDAN (1784–1862)

1820. Virginius. London, 1820.
1825. William Tell. London, 1825.
1832. The Hunchback. London, 1832.
1833. The Wife. London, 1833.
1837. The Love Chase. London, 1837.
The Dramatic Works of James Sheridan Knowles. 2 vols. London, 1856.

LAWRENCE, D. H.

1914. The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd. London, 1914.

LOVELL, GEORGE WILLIAM (1804–1878)

1842. Love's Sacrifice; or, The Rival Merchants. Lacy (67).
1846. The Wife's Secret. Lacy (82).

LOVELL, MARIA (1803–1877)

1851. Ingomar the Barbarian. Adapted from Friedrich Halm's *Der Sohn der Wildniss*. London, 1854.

MARSTON, WESTLAND (1819–1890)

1841. The Patrician's Daughter. London, 1841.
1849. Strathmore. London, 1849.
1850. Marie de Méranie. London, 1850.
1858. A Hard Struggle. Lacy (48).
1863. Donna Diana. From Moreto's *El Desden con el Desden*.
1866. A Favorite of Fortune.
1867. A Hero of Romance. From Feuillet's *Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre*.
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MASEFIELD, JOHN.
1908. The Tragedy of Nan. London, 1909.
1910. The Tragedy of Pompey the Great. London, 1910.
Philip the King. London, 1914.
The Faithful. London, 1915.
MASON, A. E. W. (1865–)
1911. The Witness for the Defence. S. French.
1914. Green Stockings. S. French.
MAUGHAM, WILLIAM SOMERSET (1874–)
1903. A Man of Honour. *Fortnightly Review*, 1903.
1907. Lady Frederick.
1908. Jack Straw. London, 1912.
1908. Mrs. Dot. London, 1912.
1909. Smith. London, 1913.
1910. The Tenth Man. London, 1913.
1914. The Land of Promise. London, 1914.
MCEVOY, CHARLES (1879–)
1907. David Ballard. London, 1907.
MEREDITH, GEORGE (1828–1909)
1910. The Sentimentalists. London, 1912.
MERIVALE, HERMAN CHARLES (1839–1906)
1872. A Son of the Soil. Founded on Ponsard's *Lion Amoureux*. Lacy (97).
1874. The White Pilgrim. Founded on a legend by Gilbert à Beckett. Lacy (113).
MERIVALE, H. C. and GROVE, F. C.
1879. Forget-Me-Not.
MERIVALE, H. C. and SIMPSON, J. PALGRAVE.
1875. All for Her. From Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*.
Alone. Lacy (103).

MOFFAT, GRAHAM

1911. Bunty Pulls the Strings.

MONKHOUSE, ALLAN

1910. The Choice.

See Four Tragedies, London, 1913.

MOORE, GEORGE (1857–)

1892. The Strike at Arlingford. London, 1893.

1900. The Bending of the Bough. London, 1900.

1911. Esther Waters.

MORTON, JOHN MADDISON (1811–1891)

Lend Me Five Shillings. Lacy.

Grimshaw, Bagshaw and Bradshaw. Lacy.

1847. Box and Cox.

MURRAY, GILBERT (1866–)

1899. Carlyon Sahib. London, 1900.

From Euripides: Hippolytus; Bacchæ; Trojan Women; Electra; Medea. Played at Court Theatre, 1902–1907.

OXENFORD, J. (1812–1877)

1875. The Two Orphans. From Dennery's *Les Deux Orphelines*. London, 1875.

1859. Ivy Hall. From Feuillet's *Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre*.

The World of Fashion. From Scribe and Legouvé, *Les Droits de Fée*. Lacy (55).

PARKER, LOUIS NAPOLEON (1852–)

1893. Gudgeons.

1896. Rosemary.

1909. Beethoven.

1910. Pomander Walk. London, 1912.

1911. Disraeli. London, 1913.

1913. Joseph and his Brethren.

PHILLIPS, STEPHEN (1868–1916)

1901. Paolo and Francesca. London, 1900.
1900. Herod. London, 1901.
1902. Ulysses. London, 1902.
The Sin of David. London, 1904.
1906. Nero. London, 1906.

PINERO, SIR ARTHUR WING (1855–)

1881. The Money Spinner.
1883. Lords and Commons.
1885. The Magistrate. London, 1892.
1886. The Schoolmistress. London, 1894.
1886. The Hobby Horse. London, 1892.
1887. Dandy Dick. London, 1893.
1888. Sweet Lavender. London, 1893.
1888. The Weaker Sex. London, 1894.
1889. The Profligate. London, 1891.
1890. The Cabinet Minister. London, 1892.
1891. Lady Bountiful. London, 1891.
1891. The Times. London, 1891.
1893. The Amazons. London, 1895.
1893. The Second Mrs. Tanqueray. London, 1895.
1895. The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith. London, 1896.
1895. The Benefit of the Doubt. London, 1896.
1897. The Princess and the Butterfly. London, 1898.
1898. Trelawney of the "Wells." London, 1899.
1899. The Gay Lord Quex. London, 1900.
1901. Iris. London, 1902.
1903. Letty. London, 1904.
1904. A Wife without a Smile. London, 1905.
1906. His House in Order. London, 1906.
1908. The Thunderbolt. London, 1909.
1909. Midchannel. London, 1911.
1911. Preserving Mr. Panmure. London, 1912.

1913. Play-goers. London, 1913.
1912. The "Mind the Paint" Girl. London, 1913.
1915. The Big Drum.

PLANCHÉ, JAMES ROBINSON (1796–1880)

1820. The Vampire. London, 1820.
1821. Kenilworth Castle; or, The Days of Queen Bess.
1822. Maid Marian. Opera. London, 1822.
1826. Oberon. London, 1826.
1828. Charles XII; or, The Siege of Stralsund. Cumberland's British Theatre (25).
1840. The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood. London, 1840.
1843. Fortunio. London, 1843.
1843. The Fair One with the Golden Locks. Christmas Piece. London, 1852.
1849. Island of Jewels. Christmas Piece. Founded on *Serpentin Vert* of Countess d'Aulnoy. London, 1850.
1846. The "Birds" of Aristophanes. London, 1846.
1849. Beauty and the Beast. London, 1849.

The Extravaganzas of J. R. Planché, 1825–1871. 5 vols. London, 1879.

PLANCHÉ, J. R. and DANCE, CHARLES.

1831. Olympic Revels; or, Prometheus and Pandora. Burlesque. London, 1834.
1836. Riquet with the Tuft. From the French *Riquet à la Houppe*. Extravaganza. London, 1837.

READE, CHARLES (1814–1884)

1851. The Ladies' Battle. Abridged from French of Scribe and Legouvé. Lacy (108).
1853. Gold! From Zola's *L'Assommoir*. Lacy (11).

1854. The Courier of Lyons. From the French of Moreau, Siraudin and Delacour. Lacy (15). Played also as The Lyons Mail.

ROBERTSON, THOMAS WILLIAM (1829–1871)

1864. David Garrick. From French of Melisville's *Sullivan*. Lacy (117).
1865. Society. Lacy. (71).
1866. Ours. De Witt, New York, 1879.
1867. Caste. De Witt, New York, 1878.
1868. Play. Lacy (1969).
1869. School. From German of Roderick Benedix: *Aschenbrödel*. De Witt, New York, 1879.
1869. Home. From French of Augier: *L'Aventurière*. De Witt, New York, 1879.
1870. M. P. Lacy (1963)

The Principal Dramatic Works of Thomas W. Robertson. Edited by T. W. Robertson, the Younger. London, 1889.

SELBY, CHARLES (1802?–1863)

1843. Robert Macaire; or, L'Auberge des Adrets, or, The Two Murderers. Duncombe (123).

SHARP, WILLIAM (1855–1905)

A Northern Night. London, 1894.
The Passion of Père Hilarion. London, 1894.
The Birth of a Soul. London, 1894.
The Fallen God. London, 1894.
1900. The House of Usna. London, 1900.
The Immortal Hour. London, 1900.

SHAW, GEORGE BERNARD (1856–)

1892. Widowers' Houses. London, 1898.
The Philanderer. London, 1898.
1902. Mrs. Warren's Profession. London, 1898.
1894. Arms and the Man. London, 1898.

1897. Candida. London, 1898.
1897. The Man of Destiny. London, 1898.
1900. You Never Can Tell. London, 1898.
Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant contain the above in 2 vols. London, 1898.
1897. The Devil's Disciple. London, 1900.
1906. Cæsar and Cleopatra. London, 1900.
1900. Captain Brassbound's Conversion. London, 1900.
The above three in Plays for Puritans. London, 1900.
1905. Man and Superman. London, 1903.
1903. John Bull's Other Island. London, 1907.
1904. How He Lied to Her Husband. London, 1907.
1905. Major Barbara. London, 1909.
1906. The Doctor's Dilemma. London, 1911.
1908. Getting Married. London, 1911.
1909. Press Cuttings. London, 1909.
1909. The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet. London, 1911.
1910. Misalliance. London, 1914.
1911. Fanny's First Play. London, 1914.
1912. Androcles and the Lion. New York, 1913.
1913. Pygmalion. Berlin, 1913; London, 1914.
1916. The Great Catherine. New York, 1915.

SIMS, GEORGE ROBERT (1847–)

1881. The Lights o' London.
1885. Harbour Lights.
1886. The Romany Rye.
1888. The Scarlet Sin.
1896. Two Little Vagabonds.

SIMS, G. R. and PETTITT, HENRY.

1883. In the Ranks.

SIMPSON, JOHN PALGRAVE (1807–1887).
1857. Daddy Hardacre.
1859. A School for Coquettes. Lacy (91).
1861. A Scrap of Paper. From Sardou's *Pattes de Mouche*. Lacy (51).
Shadows of the Past. Lacy (97).
SIMPSON, J. PALGRAVE and DALE, FELIX.
1868. Time and the Hour. Lacy (81).
SOWERBY, GITHA.
1912. Rutherford and Son. London, 1912.
STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS (1850–1894) and HENLEY, W. E. (1849–1903)
1882. Deacon Brodie.
1890. Beau Austin. London, 1892.
Robert Macaire. London, 1897.
SUTRO, ALFRED (1863–)
1904. The Walls of Jericho. S. French.
1904. Mollentrave on Women. London, 1905.
1906. The Fascinating Mr. Vanderveldt. London, 1906.
1907. John Glayde's Honour. London, 1907.
1908. The Builder of Bridges. London, 1909.
1911. The Perplexed Husband. London, 1913.
TALFOURD, THOMAS NOON (1795–1854)
1836. Ion. London, 1835.
TAYLOR, SIR HENRY (1800–1886)
1847. Philip van Artevelde. London, 1834.
TAYLOR, TOM (1817–1880)
1855. Still Waters Run Deep. Lacy (22).
1858. Our American Cousin.
1860. The Overland Route. Lacy (No. 1853).
1863. The Ticket of Leave Man. From Brisebarre and Nus, *Le Retour de Melun*. Lacy (59).

1869. The Fool's Revenge. From Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse.* Lacy (43).
1871. Joan of Arc.
1875. Anne Boleyn.
Historical Dramas of Tom Taylor. London, 1877.

TAYLOR, TOM and DUBOURG, A. W.
1859. New Men and Old Acres. Lacy (90).

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1852. Masks and Faces. London, 1854.
1854. A King's Rival. London, 1854.
1854. Two Loves and a Life. London, 1854.

TODHUNTER, JOHN (1839–1915)
1893. The Black Cat.
1894. The Comedy of Sighs.

WEBB, CHARLES.
1856. Belphegor, or, The Mountebank. From *Paillasse* of Dennery and Fournier.

WILDE, OSCAR FINGALL O'FLAHERTIE WILLS (1856–1900)
1892. Lady Windermere's Fan. London, 1893.
1893. A Woman of No Importance. London, 1894.
1895. Salome. Paris, 1893; London, 1894.
1895. An Ideal Husband. London, 1899.
1895. The Importance of Being Earnest. London, 1899.

WILLS, W. G. (1828–1891)
1872. Medea in Corinth.
1872. Charles the First. Edinburgh and London, 1873.
1873. Eugene Aram.
1873. Olivia. From Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield.*
1878. Nell Gwynne.

1878. Vanderdecken. (The Flying Dutchman.)
1883. Claudian.

ZANGWILL, ISRAEL (1864–)
1899. Children of the Ghetto.
1903. Merely Mary Ann.
1908. The Melting Pot. London, 1909.
1911. The War God. London, 1911.
1912. The Next Religion. London, 1912.

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